CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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India surpasses Japan to become 4th largest economy

India's real GDP grew 8.2% in the second quarter of 2025-26, up from 7.8% in the first quarter and 7.4% in the 4th quarter of the last fiscal

India GDP Growth Projections (2025–2027)

2026: 6.5%
World Bank

2026: 6.4%
Moody's

2027: 6.5%

2025: 6.6%
IMF

2026: 6.2%

2025: 6.7%
OECD

2026: 6.2%

NEW DELHI

India has surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy with a size of USD 4.18 trillion, and is poised to overtake Germany to become the third-largest by 2030, the government has said.

With continuing good growth numbers, India is also the world's fastest-growing major economy.

India's real GDP grew 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2025-26, up from 7.8 per cent in the first quarter and 7.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal.

"With GDP valued at USD 4.18 trillion, India has surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy, and is poised to displace Germany from the third rank in the next 2.5 to 3 years with a projected GDP of USD 7.3 trillion by 2030," according to a government release.

The World Bank has projected a 6.5 per cent growth in 2026; Moody's expects India to remain the fastest-growing G20 economy with a growth of 6.4 per cent in 2026 and 6.5 per cent in 2027.

The IMF has raised its projections to 6.6 per cent for 2025 and 6.2 per cent for 2026; the OECD forecasts 6.7 per cent growth in 2025 and 6.2 per cent in 2026. Also, S&P anticipates a growth of 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal and 6.7 per cent in the next; the Asian Development Bank has lifted its 2025 forecast to 7.2 per cent; and Fitch has raised its FY26 projection to 7.4 per cent on stronger consumer demand.

"India is among the world's fastest-growing major economies and is well-positioned to sustain this momentum. With the ambition of attaining high middle-income status by 2047- the centenary year of its independence, the country is building on strong foundations of economic growth, structural reforms, and social progress," the government said.

CM writes to PM, seeks suspension of G Ram G Act

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to suspend the implementation of the VB-G Ram G Act and initiate a process of consultation with the state governments to hear their views on the changes proposed. The CM highlighted several implementation challenges including a severe funds crunch.

Earlier, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan also wrote to the PM highlighting the challenges and disapproving of the law.

According to Siddaramaiah, while the new law raises the promised guarantee from 100 to 125 days, the promise is not matched by planning or assured Central funding. The new Act caps the Union Government's financial responsibility to a "normative allocation" for a "notified" area of each State, with the Centre contributing only 60% of that allocation. As a result, the so-called legal guarantee of 125 days is not absolute, Siddaramaiah said, fearing that the new law may leave many Gram Panchayats without funds.

"The new Act shifts this to 60:40 for most States, converting a statutory guarantee into a run of the mill scheme and placing significant additional burden on State finances.This shift appears to have been introduced without meaningful consultation with State Governments."

—Siddaramaiah, K'taka CM

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah urges PM Modi to halt VB-G Ram G Act, citing funding gaps and fears it weakens demand-driven MGNREGA-style guarantees.

A demand-driven regime is being converted into a supply-driven, top-down system, contrary to the current participatory approach where labour budgets are prepared at the Gram Panchayat level and allocations follow demand generated from villages, the CM said.

"The Act also requires States to notify in advance an aggregate 60-day period during peak sowing and harvesting seasons when works under the Act shall not be undertaken. While agricultural activity may increase during that time, such a blanket restriction curtails the right of those who still need wage employment, particularly vulnerable groups, including tribal and marginalised communities, who may not find adequate farm work," Siddaramaiah said.

The new Act further states that any expenditure incurred by a State beyond its normative allocation shall be borne by the State Government as per procedures prescribed by the Centre. This could leave States facing 100% liability for demand beyond a centrally fixed limit, CM noted.

QUICK READ

WB CM Mamata calls SIR 'huge scam'

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday vowed to gherao the Election Commission's office in Delhi if the name of a single legitimate voter is deleted from the final electoral roll after the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in the state. Addressing a rally in Bankura district, Banerjee targeted Union Home Minister Amit Shah and described the SIR as a huge "scam" being conducted with the help of artificial intelligence (AI). "SIR is being conducted using AI, it's a huge scam. Only you (Amit Shah) and your son will survive," she said. She stated that the poor people of West Bengal are being "tortured" in the name of SIR. More on page 7

'Battle of Galwan' faces criticism

NEW DELHI: Salman Khan's upcoming film Battle of Galwan, based on the 2020 India-China clash in the Galwan Valley, has drawn criticism from China's Global Times, which called it a cinematic exaggeration distorting facts. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, the movie stars Salman as Bikkumalla Santosh Babu, who along with 19 soldiers, was martyred defending Indian territory. The 1.12-minute teaser, released on Salman's 60th birthday, has crossed 60 million views, featuring patriotic sequences and the song "Mera Bharat Desh Mahaan Hai." Government sources defended the film as artistic expression, citing India's history of war films. Produced by Salman and Salma Khan, the movie is set to release on April 17, 2026.

KOGILU EVICTION ROW

DCM defends decision to rehabilitate evicted people

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday defended the state government's decision to provide alternate housing for "genuine" individuals whose illegally constructed houses were demolished in Kogilu during a recent demolition drive, while dismissing allegations of "appeasement politics". He emphasised that relief is a humanitarian measure only for eligible locals after thorough verification of documents.

Shivakumar was reacting to some BJP leaders and some sections questioning the government's quick relief to those whose houses were demolished by a government agency, terming them as "illegal encroachment".

They have also accused the state government of engaging in "appeasement politics" as most of the demolished illegal houses reportedly belonged to Muslims.

"There is no question of any appeasement politics. No one should indulge in illegal encroachment, we are not ready to give any gifts to illegal encroachers. We will take legal action against those behind encroachment. People have given statements that money was collected from them," Shivakumar said in response to a question BJP alleging government of Muslim appeasement politics.

No Bangladeshis in Kogilu Layout: Min Zameer

Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan clarified that, according to available information, there are no Bangladeshi nationals living in the Kogilu layout, and houses will be allotted only to those with valid documents.

Congress MLA Veerendra Pappi gets bail

BENGALURU

Congress MLA from Challakere constituency, KC Veerendra (popularly known as Pappi), who had been in judicial custody for the past four months, was granted bail today by the Special Court for Elected Representatives in Bengaluru.

Veerendra was arrested on August 23, 2025, by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with an illegal money transfer case. He was also implicated in an online betting investigation, during which the ED conducted raids and froze assets worth ₹55 crore. Reports indicate that around ₹40.69 crore was traced across nine of Veerendra's bank accounts, while ₹14.46 crore was identified in 262 "mule" accounts, totaling ₹55 crore. Additionally, five luxury vehicles linked to him were seized.

The court granted conditional bail requiring a bond of ₹5 lakh and two sureties. Veerendra is prohibited from leaving the jurisdiction without prior permission, must cooperate with ongoing investigations, and must not intimidate or threaten witnesses. The ED has clarified that the investigation into illicit financial transactions and online betting operations remains active.

Cong made state 'Udta K'taka', sacrificing Kannadigas: BYV

BELAGAVI

BJP state chief B Y Vijayendra on Tuesday alleged that the Congress government in Karnataka has turned the state into "Udta Karnataka", akin to "Udta Punjab", by failing to control drugs and prioritising the interests of outsiders over Kannadigas.

Speaking to reporters, Vijayendra accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar of yielding to pressure from Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal regarding house allocations in Kogilu Layout, Yelahanka. He claimed that houses meant for local poor and scheduled caste beneficiaries were being allotted to Kerala immigrants who had illegally encroached government land.

Vijayendra said, "After demolition of illegal encroachments, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar performed a U-turn following Kerala leadership's interventions. To save their chairs, they are sacrificing Kannadigas' interests." He alleged guidelines for allocation were compromised, with houses built from taxpayers' money being handed over to outsiders, hurting the self-respect of locals.

The BJP leader further criticised the Congress government for neglecting local disaster victims. He said flood-affected Karnataka citizens were ignored while Kerala received aid and compensation.

Ex-B'desh PM Khaleda Zia passes away; EAM to attend funeral

DHAKA

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson Khaleda Zia passed away on Tuesday at the age of 80 following prolonged health complications, including cirrhosis, diabetes, arthritis, and heart issues. The External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will represent India at the funeral, highlighting the significance of bilateral ties. Prominent leaders, including PM Narendra Modi, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, and Rahul Gandhi, have expressed condolences. Global leaders from Pakistan and China have also mourned her passing. Khaleda Zia's funeral will be held today, with burial beside her late husband.

Providing houses to encroachers is ironic: Joshi

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi slammed the Karnataka government for allegedly rushing to provide relief to Bengaluru's Kogilu encroachers within two days, calling it "appeasement politics." He questioned why farmers, disaster victims, homeless citizens and guarantee scheme beneficiaries wait for years while encroachers receive houses and subsidies so quickly.

'What about genuine housing applicants?' asks Karandlaje

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje questioned why Karnataka is prioritising alleged illegal migrants in the Kogilu case while ignoring genuine state applicants seeking housing. She demanded a high-level probe into illegal immigration and accused the state leadership of yielding to Delhi pressure while compromising Karnataka's interests.

INDIGENOUS AVIATION BOOST

Next-Gen 'Dhruv NG' multi-role helicopter takes to skies in Bengaluru

BENGALURU

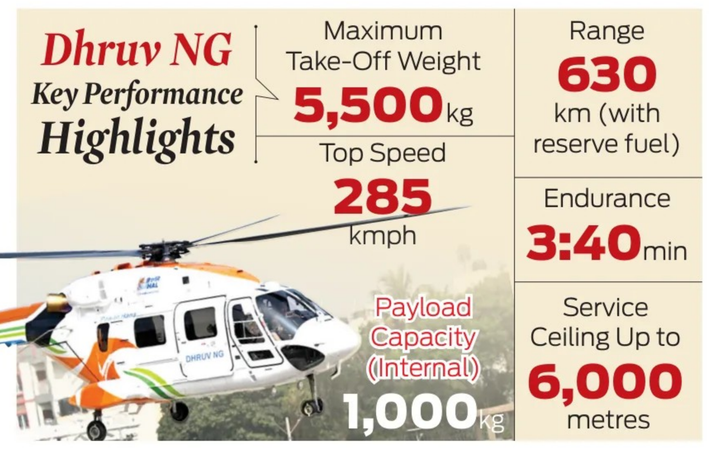
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) Dhruv NG multi-role helicopter successfully completed its maiden flight at the HAL Helicopter Division in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

It marked a significant milestone for India's indigenous civil aviation programme. Designed and manufactured by HAL, the Dhruv NG is a 5.5-tonne, light twin-engine helicopter developed to meet diverse civilian and specialised operational requirements.

PCH PHOTO

HAL said the Dhruv NG has been engineered to master the challenging conditions of Indian terrain while also catering to global civil aviation standards. The helicopter is powered by twin Shakti 1H1C engines that offer enhanced power ratings and the advantage of in-country maintenance support. It also features a civil-certified glass cockpit compliant with AS4 requirements, modern avionics for superior situational awareness, advanced vibration control systems and a proven twin-engine configuration for high redundancy.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu witnessed the maiden flight and lauded HAL's efforts in strengthening indigenous rotary-wing capabilities. HAL noted that the Dhruv NG's highly configurable 7.33 cubic metre cabin allows it to be deployed for VIP transport, passenger utility, air ambulance services, law enforcement and disaster relief operations, positioning it as a versatile platform for civilian use.



QUICK READ

Man kills friend in drunken brawl in Bengaluru

Bengaluru

A tragic incident occurred in Konanakunte when a drunken argument between friends turned fatal. Bhagirath Sagar, a young construction worker from West Bengal, was murdered by his friend Deepu Mandal over a trivial dispute during a party. The confrontation escalated violently, and Mandal struck Sagar on the head with a hammer, killing him. Both men worked together in Konanakunte. Following the incident, the Konanakunte police registered a case, and Deepu Mandal has been arrested. Authorities are investigating the circumstances surrounding the brawl and the motive behind the attack.

DCP inspects New Year security on MG Road, Church Street

Bengaluru

Ahead of New Year's Eve celebrations, the Deputy Commissioner of Police conducted a security inspection on MG Road and Church Street. Central Division DCP Akshay and West Division Traffic DCP Anoop Shetty reviewed arrangements, including CCTV installation, traffic diversions, and parking plans. Officials ensured that all measures were in place as per the security map. The police department has completed preparations for the countdown celebrations on Wednesday night, aiming to maintain public safety and smooth crowd management during the festivities. Authorities urged citizens to cooperate and follow traffic and safety instructions.

GBA Commissioner conducts tax collection drive at KR Puram

Bengaluru

Greater Bengaluru Authority's East Commissioner Ramesh, along with Joint Commissioner Dr. Sudha, led a tax collection drive at KR Puram, targeting shops with the highest property tax arrears. Officials seized several shops and stalls across areas including Horamavu and issued warnings to shopkeepers. The drive also addressed encroachments by squatters. Authorities emphasized that regular payment of property taxes is mandatory to avoid penalties and further action. The campaign aims to ensure compliance and improve revenue collection while maintaining orderly commercial spaces in Bengaluru East.

DCM DK Shivakumar clarifies his remarks on Kerala Government

Shivakumar also confirmed that he would participate in Kerala election campaigns

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar clarified that his recent comments were directed at the Kerala government's administrative interventions and not at the people of Kerala. Addressing the media at Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday, he accused BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar of deliberately twisting his statements to mislead the public. Shivakumar emphasized the strong bond and mutual respect he shares with the people of Kerala, noting that Keralites hold him in high regard.

Shivakumar also confirmed that he would participate in Kerala election campaigns, asserting that BJP attempts to create confusion should not distract their efforts. He added that party leaders have advised them, and they are following their guidance.

On development initiatives, the Deputy Chief Minister stated that Karnataka's Irrigation Corporation and Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam are undertaking projects worth ₹5,000 crore. He highlighted the priority given to the UKP project's land acquisition, requiring ₹70,000 crore, with other works scheduled for subsequent phases.

Responding to questions about the state's governance priorities in 2026, Shivakumar reiterated the government's focus on efficient administration, ensuring farmers benefit from filled reservoirs, and continuing the state's guaranteed welfare schemes. He also mentioned the upcoming local body elections and expressed confidence that under Congress leadership, good governance would continue over the next seven years.

When asked about speculations regarding him becoming Chief Minister in the first week of January, Shivakumar advised the media to disregard such statements, reinforcing that his focus remains on development and public welfare rather than political rumors.

This statement comes amid heightened political activity in Karnataka and Kerala, with Shivakumar seeking to balance administrative transparency with active party engagement.

Allottees flag design gaps in Bengaluru's Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout

Residents raise concerns over infrastructure, walkability, and utility connections at NPKL.

BENGALURU

Allottees in the III and IV Blocks of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL), situated between Mysuru Road and Magadi Road, have highlighted critical infrastructure gaps that could hinder habitation if not addressed promptly. While welcoming the accelerated pace of development under the current administration, residents said the layout remains far from liveable.

Among the major concerns, footpaths are missing across the layout, which could worsen traffic congestion and pollution. During a review meeting on December 24, allottees urged the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to revisit the design and involve mobility experts to avoid repeating mistakes seen in other parts of the city. Key roads, including a 60-feet link from III Block A Sector to the 300-feet arterial road, remain incomplete. Another road near a stormwater drain has reportedly been encroached upon, disrupting construction activities.

Boundary demarcation errors were also highlighted, with misaligned markings causing structures to spill into neighbouring plots, potentially triggering future legal disputes. The absence of electricity, water, and sanitary connections has discouraged early settlement. Rising theft of electrical and construction materials has further underlined the need for streetlights and temporary police outposts.

BDA Chairman NA Haris stated that around 78 percent of development work at NPKL is complete, with the remaining 22 percent expected to be finished within five to six months. "There are a few minor technical issues, such as sanitary pipeline work, but overall, progress is smooth. Other issues raised by residents will also be addressed," he added.

Residents emphasized that addressing these gaps is crucial to making NPKL a truly habitable, well-planned layout, ensuring safety, mobility, and access to essential utilities for current and future occupants.

Evening outpatient department planned at Victoria Hospital

BENGALURU

The outpatient department (OPD) at Victoria Hospital plans to extend its consultation hours from the current 9 am–4 pm schedule to 8 pm, following a directive from the state government. On average, 650–750 patients visit the OPD daily across multiple specialties, including general medicine. The move aims to reduce overcrowding and improve access to healthcare.

Dr ST Kavya, Dean of Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI), said, "Based on government instructions, we intend to run an evening OPD clinic from 4 pm to 8 pm. Currently, even after the OPD closes, patients are seen in the casualty room, but the evening clinic will allow systematic care for those visiting later in the day."

BMCRI is currently consulting heads of all departments to draft a formal proposal, which will then be submitted to the state government for approval. The extended OPD hours may also be implemented in other BMCRI-affiliated hospitals, such as Vani Vilas Hospital, if the government decides to expand the initiative.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao recently noted in the Legislative Council that there is currently no waiting period for patients at Victoria Hospital. Apart from Karnataka residents, patients from neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh also seek treatment at the hospital.

The introduction of evening OPD hours is expected to enhance patient convenience, reduce congestion during peak hours, and ensure timely medical attention for those unable to visit during standard operating hours, marking a significant step toward improving healthcare access in Bengaluru.

Man arrested for setting mother ablaze

BENGALURU

Basaveshwaranagar police have arrested Muthu Abhimanyu for allegedly dousing his mother Geetha with petrol and setting her on fire after she refused to agree to his demand regarding his daughter's marriage. The incident occurred at Bhovi Colony on December 23. Police said Geetha, who runs a grocery store in Bhovi Palya, sustained severe burn injuries and is undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital. The accused, who owns a tea shop nearby and had recently started staying at Geetha's house, allegedly harassed her 19-year-old daughter over marriage. Following an argument at home, he reportedly attacked Geetha and fled.

Cop's hunch saved a toddler from peril

BENGALURU

A routine evening patrol turned into a life-saving intervention when ASI BG Mallikarjun of Tilaknagar police rescued a two-year-old boy from a mentally unstable woman near Ragi Gudda in Jayanagar, South Bengaluru. Mallikarjun noticed a woman in her late 40s carrying the toddler and recognised her from a recent incident in which she had torn down a Dr BR Ambedkar banner, later attributed to her mental instability. Sensing that the child might not belong to her, he approached the woman to question her.

The woman reacted aggressively, claiming she had saved the child from an accident and that God had given him to her. She demanded gratitude instead of scrutiny, but Mallikarjun was unconvinced. He intervened, safely taking the toddler from her grasp while onlookers recorded the unusual scene. Acting swiftly, Mallikarjun shared the child's photo and a brief video in the South Division police WhatsApp group, alerting nearby stations.

Fatal gap: Vaccine alone insufficient for severe dog bites, doctors warn

BENGALURU

The tragic death of a 12-year-old girl from rabies, weeks after a dog bite, has highlighted a critical gap in post-exposure care: the absence of Rabies Immunoglobulin (RIG) administration for severe bites.

Despite receiving four doses of anti-rabies vaccine, the girl developed paralytic rabies and succumbed at a city hospital. She had sustained a category-3 bite, a deep puncture on her right leg, which mandates RIG to neutralise the virus at the wound site before it reaches the nervous system. Doctors at Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (IGICH) stressed that vaccination alone cannot prevent rabies in high-risk injuries. Complete post-exposure prophylaxis—proper wound washing, vaccine, and RIG—is essential.

The child's symptoms initially did not include classical signs such as hydrophobia, seizures, or altered behaviour, complicating diagnosis. She first experienced difficulty walking, sitting, and urinary retention. Physicians considered alternatives such as Acute Demyelinating Encephalomyelitis (ADEM), Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), and Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP). By the ninth day, she developed altered sensorium, dystonic limb movements, and loss of brainstem reflexes, prompting saliva PCR tests that confirmed rabies encephalitis.

Paediatric neurologist Dr Vykunta Raju Gowda noted that paralytic rabies can mimic other neurological disorders, making clinical suspicion critical, especially in children presenting with progressive lower limb weakness and neurogenic bladder.

"This case underscores the necessity of timely and complete post-exposure prophylaxis, including RIG, to prevent rare but fatal outcomes," Dr Gowda said.

Experts warn that gaps in awareness and administration of RIG in category-3 dog bites remain a persistent public health challenge, and immediate intervention at the wound site is crucial to prevent such tragedies.

This incident serves as a stark reminder that vaccines alone are insufficient for severe dog bites, and strict adherence to post-exposure protocols can be lifesaving.

Outcome irrelevant in bribery cases, says HC; rejects asst public prosecutor's plea

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday rejected a plea by assistant public prosecutor G. Poornima to quash proceedings against her in a bribery case registered by Lokayukta police, stating that the outcome of the work involved is irrelevant under anti-corruption laws.

Poornima, who served as an assistant public prosecutor at Tiptur Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court, faced allegations arising from a complaint filed by R. Nagarajaiah, Range Forest Officer in Chikkanayakanahalli, Tumakuru district. Nagarajaiah had been acquitted in a criminal case, and the file later reached Poornima for her opinion. Although she advised the government to appeal against the acquittal, she allegedly demanded Rs 10,000 from each of the four accused, including Nagarajaiah, promising a favourable opinion.

According to the prosecution, Narasimha Murthy, allegedly acting on Poornima's behalf, was caught by Lokayukta police while Rs 20,000 of the bribe was being transferred to his bank account. Proceedings under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, were initiated against Poornima, Murthy, and a typist.

Poornima argued that she had already given an adverse opinion, implying there was no "work" for which a bribe could be demanded, and therefore no offence was made out. However, Lokayukta police and the complainant contended that she intentionally concealed her adverse opinion and sought a bribe under the pretense of providing a favourable one.

Justice M.I. Arun clarified that under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the act of demanding or accepting gratification constitutes an offence regardless of whether the work was executed or its outcome. The court emphasised that the law targets the obtaining, accepting, or attempting to obtain illegal gratification, and the result of the work is immaterial.

FIR filed against bank manager for allegedly defrauding ₹3.11 cr

BENGALURU

Malleshwara police have registered a case against a senior bank manager for allegedly defrauding 41 customers of Rs 3.11 crore by taking loans in their names without depositing gold.

The FIR names N. Raghu, Senior Manager at Canara Bank, 15th Cross, Malleshwaram, as the accused. The complaint was filed on December 12 by the bank's AGM, Kabhinder Kumar. Police said Raghu is currently missing and an investigation is underway. Preliminary findings reveal that Raghu allegedly obtained gold loans worth Rs 3.11 crore across 41 customer accounts using blank cheques and OTPs, without depositing any gold. The scheme came to light when a defrauded customer alerted senior bank officials. In one instance, Raghu reportedly borrowed Rs 3 lakh from a customer under the pretext of a family emergency, repaying only Rs 1.30 lakh. Later, he persuaded the same customer to provide a blank cheque and OTP for his mother's account, promising repayment after securing a gold loan.

POWER SHARING ROW

High command should decide by Feb budget meeting: HM

BENGALURU

Home Minister G. Parameshwara on Tuesday hinted that the state's high command should resolve leadership and budget-related decisions ahead of the pre-budget meetings scheduled in February. Speaking near his Sadashivanagar residence, he said, "The high command should decide by then. No one else should present the budget."

Addressing the Kogilu Cross building clearance controversy, Parameshwara stated that the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister had met on Monday and decided to provide alternative housing for residents who lost their homes during the demolitions. "This decision was made after weighing the pros and cons. Those affected will be given houses," he added. The Home Minister also questioned past relief efforts, citing tsunamis and the Maharashtra earthquake, to highlight the need for timely assistance.

On the presence of Rohingyas in the state, he said, "Let us investigate whether they exist or not. We will also inform the Centre. The Bengaluru in-charge Minister should be approached for details."

Regarding the recent Hunsur gold robbery, Parameshwara clarified that police action is underway. "Three or four people committed the robbery in five minutes. They will not be spared. I am confident the culprits will be caught," he asserted.

Commenting on New Year preparations, Parameshwara said he chaired an official meeting following instructions from the Chief Minister, emphasizing safety for women and children. "Accidents often increase during this time, especially on highways. We have instructed officials to pay special attention and ensure public safety during celebrations," he said.

The Minister's remarks underscore the administration's focus on resolving leadership and budget matters efficiently while simultaneously addressing citizen safety, housing rehabilitation, and law enforcement priorities ahead of the state's upcoming key events.

QUICK READ

Vaikunta Ekadashi celebrated

Bengaluru

Vaikuntha Ekadashi was celebrated with great pomp and show in the presence of Sri Venkateswara at Sri Vishwavidya Ganapathi Temple in Kengeri Sub-city of Yeshwantpur Assembly Constituency. Thousands of devotees arrived and entered the Vaikuntha Dwara and had darshan of the God and were purified. People stood in queue from early in the morning amid cold and arrangements were made for special entrance for senior citizens and physically disabled persons. On this occasion, State Farmers' Morcha President M Rudresh, former BBMP Member R Anjanappa, former Ullal Ward President Shashikumar and others were present.

Security teams deploy dogs ahead of New Year

Bengaluru

Tight security measures have been put in place across the state to prevent any incidents of vandalism in the wake of New Year celebrations. The Anti-Violence Squad is conducting extensive inspections across the state. Teams of officers and staff are conducting intensive checks across the state. Dog squad and bomb squad teams actively participated in the inspection operation. Crowded places such as bus stands, railway stations, airports, hotels, major junctions in the city and places where people gather for New Year celebrations are being thoroughly checked.

Kerala government interference, not people: DCM clarifies

Bengaluru

"I have said that the Kerala government should not interfere in the administration of the Karnataka government, but I have not spoken about the Keralites. BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar is misleading the people by twisting my statement," DK Shivakumar said. He was responding to questions from the media at Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday. When asked about Rajeev Chandrasekhar's remarks, he said, the people of Kerala have a good bond with me. The people of Kerala love me very much. I have a lot of respect for him. I will go to Kerala for election campaigning. BJP is trying to create confusion. They don't want to squeeze sour like this. Our party leaders have suggested to us and we will accept it, he added.

NY fiesta: Traffic curbs to extended metro timings

From 8 pm on December 31 to 2 am on January 1 some important roads will be closed regarding private vehicle movement

BENGALURU

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh, along with other senior officers, rides motorcycles during peak hours to inspect the area ahead of New Year's Eve celebrations at Bridge Road.

As city prepares for New Year's Eve, traffic police have announced large-scale restrictions across the Central Business District (CBD), Koramangala and Indiranagar to manage huge crowds.

From 8 pm on December 31 to 2 am on January 1 some important roads will be closed regarding private vehicle movement.

In a move to prevent accidents and wheeling, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that all 50 flyovers in the city will be closed, except the airport flyover, to two-wheelers on the night of December 31 from 11 pm to 6 am the next morning.

Police in city have deployed 10 drones, 249 Cobra patrol vehicles and 400 traffic wardens.

To keep a close watch on crowds authorities have put in place, four central rooms and 78 watchtowers, 164 women help desks, 55 ambulances stationed at strategic points, Women cab and auto drivers for female commuters, extended BMTC and Namma Metro services, drunk driving checks, strict checks at hotels, lodges pubs and entertainment centres, hospitals set up are the arrangements made.

Entry for all vehicles is prohibited on MG Road (Anil Kumble Circle to Mayo Hall), Brigade Road, Church Street, Rest House Road, and Museum Road from 8 pm of December 31 to 2 am on January 1.

Parking is strictly prohibited on the said roads. Drivers must vacate their vehicles by 4 pm on Wednesday or face towing and fines.

Pedestrians on Brigade Road will only be allowed to walk from MG Road towards Opera Junction. Moving in the opposite direction is prohibited. Public parking is available at the Shivajinagar BMTC Complex first floor, UB City, Garuda Mall, and Kamaraj Road.

Drunk driving checks will be conducted at 166 identified points. If you are in a group, ensure at least one person is a designated sober driver, a senior officer said.

BWSSB backs startup-led water innovation

BENGALURU

In a move to boost innovation in water reuse, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has opened its sewage treatment plants to startups, starting with the Kadubeesanahalli STP. Under the Brand Bengaluru vision, BWSSB has approved a proposal allowing a startup to install advanced water purification equipment at its own cost, while the Board will supply raw wastewater and support market linkages.

As part of the pilot, the startup will receive access to about 70,000 litres of high-grade treated water daily. This will enable real-time research, limited commercial operations, and hands-on understanding of challenges involved in scaling and commercialising recycled-water technologies.

BWSSB Chairman Dr Ram Prasath Manohar said Bengaluru's water security depends on homegrown innovation and sustainable reuse solutions. He said opening up STPs as live laboratories will strengthen the city's recycled-water ecosystem while promoting long-term self-reliance. Since BWSSB is not investing capital, the initiative also serves as a low-risk learning platform that expands the market for quality reclaimed water.

BWSSB Chairman Dr Ram Prasath Manohar said that Swiss universities and startups showing interest in collaborating reflects global confidence in Bengaluru's water innovation ecosystem.

Opening up STPs as live laboratories will strengthen the city's recycled-water ecosystem while promoting long-term self-reliance, Manohar said a new scheme has been formulated to allow startups to test proof-of-concept technologies in wastewater management and water supply under real-world conditions.

Vaikuntha Ekadashi: Devotees throng temples to offer special prayers

BENGALURU

Vaikunta Ekadasi was celebrated across the country on Tuesday. Devotees are visiting temples and offering special prayers.

Special arrangements were made at the Vaiyalikavala TTD temple in Bengaluru. Arrangements were made for darshan from 1:30 am to 11 pm the next day. 80 thousand devotees are expected to come. Arrangements were made for darshan by putting up separate barricades. Devotees are arriving for darshan from early morning.

There are 24 Ekadashis in a year. Vaikuntha Ekadashi has special significance. According to Vedic astrology, the gates of Vishnu's abode are open on this day. Therefore, devotees fast on Vaikuntha Ekadashi. It is believed that this will fulfill the prayers of the devotees.

A large number of devotees are flocking to the ISKCON temple on the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. Devotees have been standing in queues since early morning for darshan. MLA Gopalaiah's family has visited the ISKCON temple.

Special prayers are being offered at the Sridevi Bhudevi Sriranganatha Swamy Temple in Nelamangala. This is an ancient temple that is more than 800 years old. Devotees are getting darshan of Vaikuntha through the north gate of the temple. More than 25 thousand devotees are expected to visit the temple.

Sudeep set to watch 'Mark' with fans on NYs Eve in Bluru, Mysuru

BENGALURU

Kannada star Kichcha Sudeep is set to celebrate New Year's Eve with his fans by watching his latest action drama 'Mark', released last week, at special screenings in Bengaluru and Mysuru.

In Bengaluru, the actor will attend a fan show at Santosh theatre in Gandhinagar in Bengaluru; a similar event is planned at Sangam theatre in Mysuru. The screenings are expected to draw large crowds, given Sudeep's strong fan following across the state.

A spokesperson handling the marketing for the film said the production team was in the process of seeking police protection and deploying private bouncers to ensure crowd control and smooth flow of screenings.

'Mark' was released on Christmas and opened to mixed reviews from the audience.

TV actress who refused to quit acting for govt job dies by suicide

BENGALURU

A 26-year-old television actress allegedly died by suicide at a paying guest (PG) facility. The police said they had found her diary entries expressing distress over family pressure to quit acting and accept a government job.

The woman, CM Nandini, was found dead in her room at Insta Living PG in Mylasandra, Kengeri, around 3.45 am, according to the police. Nandini was the elder daughter of S Mahabaleshwar, a government school teacher who died in 2021, and GR Basavarajeshwari, also a government school teacher from Kotturu in Vijayanagara district.

After completing her pre-university education in Ballari in 2018, she enrolled in a BE course at RR Institute in Hesaraghatta, but stopped attending college regularly and instead pursued acting training in Rajarajeshwari Nagar, the police said.

Development works launched by MLA ST Somashekar

BENGALURU

MLA ST Somashekar said that a suitable candidate needs to be selected in view of the approaching Greater Bengaluru Authority elections.

Speaking after launching the development work of Kittur Rani Chennamma Park in BHEL Layout of Kengeri Ward of Yeshwantpur Assembly Constituency, he said that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has released a grant of Rs 213 crore for the development of the constituency. He said that steps have been taken to use this grant to asphalt all roads, white paint main roads, and solve the drinking water problem.

The work of Uttarahalli Main Road has been delayed. The work of Krishna Priya Convenience Hall Road has been delayed due to the obstruction of MLA Krishnappa and his son Priyakrishna. He said that everything will be sorted out and the road construction will be completed.

Kengeri Block Congress President Mylasandra Nagaraj, Pattangere Jayanna, Dairy Shivanna, Arun, Manjunath, Venkatesh, Ganganna, Manoj and others were present.

Cylinder explosion case: Two booked for culpable homicide

BENGALURU

The HAL police under the Whitefield division have registered an FIR against two people after a cylinder explosion in a PG on Monday killed one and injured three others, officials said.

K Parashurama, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Whitefield, confirmed that the case was registered under the BNS section related to culpable homicide not amounting to murder against Vishnu, the building owner, and Roja, who was locally maintaining Seven Hills Sai Co Living PG near Kundalahalli.

At around 6.15 pm, fire and smoke were detected on the G+6 building housing the PG. The PG contained 43 rooms, the police said, adding that the fire was a result of a commercial Bharat Gas cylinder explosion.

The fire led to the death of Aravind (23) from Ballari, working as a senior analyst at a private firm in Bengaluru. The injured were Venkatesh (28) from Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, Vishal Verma (23) and CV Goel (25) both from Uttarakhand.

Preliminary probe revealed that the gas leak was observed around 2 pm, and it was neglected. There was also no proper ventilation.

Preliminary probe revealed that the gas leak was observed around 2 pm, and it was neglected. There was also no proper ventilation. Two commercial cylinders and one domestic cylinder were found at the spot, a senior officer told.

'Illegal Layout of Kogilu Layout Similar to Construction of Houses in Villages'

BENGALURU

Minister Madhu Bangarappa has defended the government's decision to help illegal occupants of Kogilu Layout.

Responding to the issue of eviction of illegal houses in Kogilu Layout, he said, whatever the law is, it will happen. The Deputy Chief Minister has already spoken about it and told that steps will be taken so that no one is harmed. It is also the duty of the government. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar will settle the matter, there is no problem, he said.

Responding to allegations that the government did not build houses despite the floods, he said, we are still processing. The process of resolving the problem has begun. Let it be. Will it all be over as soon as the statement is made. When there is a problem, it is the job of the government to solve it. Immigrants should not be considered from other castes or states.

PRECAUTION AGAINST TREE FALL

Work on dead, dangerous trees removal gets head start

BENGALURU

GBA plans citywide removal of dry and dangerous trees before monsoon to reduce accidents property damage and storm related emergencies

The Greater Bengaluru Authority GBA has decided to gear up early for the upcoming monsoon season and strengthen public safety measures across the city.

After completing a citywide survey of dry and dangerous trees GBA is preparing to begin a drive to remove all dead and hazardous trees across Bengaluru by April 2026. The drive is expected to start in Indiranagar and will be extended to other parts of the city in a phased manner. The survey of dry and dangerous trees across the city has been completed. We have details of the locations of these trees and plan to initiate the removal drive from the Indiranagar area. By April 2026 we aim to remove most of the dry and dangerous trees to ensure the safety of citizens during the monsoon, said GK Sudarshan, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Greater Bengaluru Authority.

The Assistant Conservators of Forests in each zone will be responsible for implementing the drive on the ground with support from deputy range forest officers ensuring coordination and timely execution as per the plan. More than a month ago GBA deployed a team of ten forestry students referred to as tree enumerators to identify avenue trees across the city that pose a risk of falling during storms and monsoon rains. The team has now identified dangerous and diseased trees that require immediate removal.

The students were brought in from Sirsi and Ponampet to carry out the exercise.

Bengaluru witnesses a large number of tree falling incidents during the monsoon which pose danger to citizens. Most of these incidents involve dead and dry trees. Through this exercise we want to minimise such cases and reduce losses to life and property, the DCF added.

QUICK READ

Child killed, 3 injured as bus crashes in Hulikal ghat

SHIVAMOGGA

A tragic bus accident occurred on the Hulikal Ghat road in Hosanagar taluk, Shivamogga district, when a private bus travelling from Davanagere to Mangaluru lost control and rammed into a hillside. Due to the severe impact, the front portion of the bus was badly damaged. A child died on the spot, while three passengers — Sharifa B (57), Imam Saab (73) and Safana (28) — sustained serious injuries. The injured were immediately shifted to a private hospital in Udupi for treatment. Upon receiving information, police from the city station rushed to the scene, conducted an inspection and registered a case in connection with the accident.

Father, son die; daughter severely injured in bus–bike collision

HUBBALLI

A tragic accident occurred near Anchattageri on the Hubballi–Karwar road when a transport bus collided with a motorcycle, resulting in the death of a father and his two-year-old son, while a four-year-old girl was seriously injured. The deceased have been identified as Mehaboob Khan Ustad (36) from Tadas village in Shiggaon taluk, Haveri district, and his son Asnen. His daughter Azeezha sustained critical injuries. Reports said the accident took place when Mehaboob attempted to overtake and crashed into an oncoming bus. The injured child has been shifted to a hospital in Hubballi for treatment.

Special Lok Adalat for LAC & LAC execution cases on Jan 24

MANDYA

A special Lok Adalat will be conducted statewide on January 24, 2026, specifically for LAC and LAC Execution cases to expedite pending matters in courts. This initiative is part of the broader "Mediation for the Nation 2.0 – 90-Day Drive" running from January to March 2026. Cases related to matrimonial disputes, family courts, motor accident claims, dishonoured cheques, commercial, service, and other civil matters can be resolved through mutual settlement at designated mediation centers within district and taluk court premises. Parties with pending cases in higher courts may also contact mediation centers in Bengaluru, Dharwad, and Kalaburagi for information. District and taluk court officials, lawyers, and related departments are urged to actively cooperate. For details, contact 08232-229345, as announced by Chief District & Sessions Judge and District Legal Services Authority Chairman Subramanya J.N.

Food Commission flags lapses, seeks public complaints statewide

The Karnataka State Food Commission inspected Chitradurga district, inviting complaints and flagging serious lapses in ration and hostels

CHITRADURGA

The Karnataka State Food Commission has launched a three-day inspection tour of Chitradurga district to review food supply, ration distribution, Anganwadi nutrition and hostel facilities, Commission Chairman Dr. H. Krishna said. Speaking at a press meet at the Deputy Commissioner's office, he stated that citizens and organisations can directly submit complaints regarding ration supply, Anganwadi food quality and student hostels.

The Commission is monitoring food quality and distribution under 14 government departments, ensuring that vulnerable groups receive their rightful entitlements. Without prior notice, teams are visiting districts to prevent officials from temporarily hiding problems. If lapses or corruption are detected, strict action will be taken, he warned.

During inspections from December 29 to 31, the team visited food godowns, Anganwadis, hostels for SC/ST, backward classes and minorities, and the Indira Gandhi Residential School. Several shortcomings were identified, particularly at the residential school functioning from a rented math, where over 350 students sit on the floor without basic facilities.

Poor hygiene in kitchens, lack of libraries and computers, and inadequate infrastructure despite heavy rent payments drew the Commission's dissatisfaction. Clarifications have been sought from officials. The Commission directed appointment of a dedicated grievance officer in the district, installation of display boards with officials' contact details at fair price shops, and strict adherence to daily shop operations. It also insisted that shops must not force beneficiaries to purchase additional items.

Regarding cancellation of BPL cards of small traders exceeding ₹8 lakh digital turnover due to payment apps, the Commission said it will recommend suitable policy changes.

It also instructed compulsory egg distribution under the midday meal scheme and quality nutrition for pregnant women and children. Several Commission members and senior district officials were present.

Min Sudhakar inaugurates training program for mango growers

District Minister Dr. M.C. Sudhakar launched a mango growers' training in Chikkaballapur, urging farmers to use modern post-harvest facilities and boost exports.

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A special training programme for mango farmers was organised at the Mango Post-Harvest Management Centre in Madikere, Chintamani taluk, under the joint initiative of the Karnataka State Mango Development and Marketing Corporation, APEDA, Horticulture Department, District Administration and Zilla Panchayat. The event focused on comprehensive nutrient management, pest and disease control, and boosting export opportunities for mango growers. District Incharge Minister and Higher Education Minister Dr. M.C. Sudhakar inaugurated the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the Madikere post-harvest centre, established in 2011, has modern facilities including a hot water treatment unit and advanced ripening chambers that enable export of mangoes to European countries. He urged farmers to make full use of these facilities and benefit from the training to enhance quality production and income.

Karnataka State Mango Development Corporation Chairman Dr. B.C. Muddu Gangadhar called on farmers to practically implement the scientific techniques learned during the programme and spread awareness among fellow cultivators to improve overall mango production standards.

Experts including retired Horticulture Department Additional Director Dr. S.V. Hittalamani, Associate Professor Dr. Ashwathnarayan, Deputy Director Lavanya, retired Joint Director Dr. C.G. Nagaraj and APEDA representative Madhumathi Andrew served as resource persons.

They provided guidance on quality enhancement, pest and disease management, and export procedures. Over 300 mango farmers from various taluks of the district participated.

Managing Director T.R. Vedamurthy, Joint Director of Horticulture Gayathri, farmers and students were also present at the programme.

Kuruba community appeals to Minister for development assistance

HARAPANAHALLI

Leaders of the Kuruba community in Harapanahalli taluk have submitted a memorandum to Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh, urging him to release grants from his department for key developmental needs of the community. They appealed for financial assistance for the overall improvement of Kanaka Bhavana in the town and for the construction of a dedicated student hostel to support education among Kuruba youth.

Community representatives said these facilities are essential to promote educational and social empowerment, particularly for students from economically weaker backgrounds. A well-equipped hostel would help rural and underprivileged students pursue higher studies without the burden of accommodation challenges, they added. Development of Kanaka Bhavana, a cultural and community centre, would also strengthen social unity and provide a platform for community activities and welfare initiatives.

Minister Byrathi Suresh was urged to respond positively and extend necessary cooperation from the government to ensure inclusive growth and upliftment of the Kuruba community. The delegation expressed confidence that timely financial support would significantly contribute to social progress and youth development.

MLA M.P. Latha Mallikarjun, Taluk Kuruba Sangha President Gonibasappa, Vice-President Vasanthappa, Secretary Parashuram, leaders including Ganesh Pailwan, Jogina Bharatesh, Basavaraj Huliyappanavar, Ramesh and several others were present during the submission of the memorandum.

NH-169 Saanuru-Maal landowners allege disparity in compensation

KARKALA

Landowners have raised concerns over significant disparities in compensation during the ongoing widening of NH-169 between Saanuru and Maal.

At a press conference held at Karkala Patrikabhavana, Premalatha Ratnakar Shetty, representing the affected landowners, highlighted the grievances.

The Saanuru-Maal Landowners' Protest Committee has urged the government to consider the compensation granted at Saanuru-Bikarnakatte for the entire stretch up to Maal.

They alleged that different rules and methods were applied to lands identified in official notifications, resulting in substantially lower compensation for properties between Saanuru and Maal. Small agricultural plots of 12.5 cents or less were undervalued, ignoring official guidelines, causing severe injustice to farmers.

Similarly, buildings on these lands were also undervalued. Original valuations were reduced by 30–40% under technical adjustments, further disadvantaging property owners. The committee criticized officials for manipulating rules to favor administrative convenience.

Additionally, contractors appointed for highway construction allegedly pressured and intimidated landowners to vacate land prematurely. In some cases, construction began before awards were granted or compensation paid, which the committee described as a serious violation of protocol.

The press meet was attended by John D'Silva, Shyam N. Shetty, Ratnakar Shetty Beluvai, Jayaram Poojari Beluvai, Anita V.S., and Padmanabha Nayak, who collectively demanded fair and transparent compensation for all affected landowners to prevent further injustice and unrest in the region.

Final voters' list released for Southeast Graduates' Council in Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA

The final voters' list for the Karnataka Legislative Council Southeast Graduates' Constituency has been officially released in the presence of representatives from various political parties, announced Additional Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy. Speaking during the announcement at the ADC office, he said the list has been prepared in accordance with the 1960 Voter Registration Rules. For public reference, the final roll has been displayed at the offices of the Deputy Commissioner, Sub-Divisional Officers and all Taluk Tahsildars during office hours. Details are also available on the district website https://chitradurga.nic.in/en.

According to the final list, Chitradurga district has a total of 41,358 registered voters, compared to 37,198 in the earlier draft list. Of these, 24,031 are male voters and 17,327 are female voters. Taluk-wise figures include: Molakalmuru with 3,306 voters (2,226 men and 1,080 women); Challakere with 7,814 (4,688 men and 3,126 women); Chitradurga taluk with 13,417 (7,144 men and 6,273 women); Hiriyur with 7,260 (4,185 men and 3,075 women); Hosadurga with 5,218 (3,196 men and 2,022 women); and Holalkere with 4,343 voters (2,592 men and 1,751 women).

The ADC appealed to all political parties to extend full cooperation in matters related to the preparation and smooth conduct of the electoral roll process. The meeting was attended by election officials and representatives of major political parties including Congress, BJP and JD(S).

Officials urged to expedite devpt work across depts

MANDYA

Minister N. Chaluvarayaswamy instructed officials to promptly provide relief to families affected by monsoon damage, noting that 151 houses were damaged this year, with ₹60.36 lakh already disbursed. Officials were directed to update beneficiary details on the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Portal for swift compensation.

At a KDP meeting in the District Panchayat Kaveri hall, he highlighted that 407 tanks in the district are fully filled, making it an opportune time to start tank development works. Simplified procedures now allow land record corrections with fewer documents, and officials are urged to conduct field verification for pending applications. Under social security schemes, 3,67,739 beneficiaries receive a monthly grant of ₹37.58 crore. Crop losses across 69.79 hectares have been compensated with ₹18.16 lakh to 198 farmers, including recent damages in Srirangapatna. Water supply projects under Jaldhare and Jal Jeevan Vision must be expedited to avoid public inconvenience. Safety measures on highways were addressed by MLA M.P. Narendra Swamy, noting 1.86 lakh traffic violations and collection of ₹4.53 crore in fines. Road repairs must be completed by February end. Officials were also instructed to improve SSC results through special classes, monitoring teachers, and distributing study materials if needed. Deemed forest surveys are 42% complete, with full survey expected in three months, placing Mandya first in the state.

Offline and online Poorti account deliveries have placed Mandya first in the state, with 67,659 offline and 59,528 online accounts processed.

Fisheries Dept invites applications for Kiosk Unit

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The Fisheries Department has invited applications from eligible beneficiaries to implement one Fish Kiosk Unit in Chikkaballapur district under the centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana for the 2025–26 financial year.

As per the revised target allocation for 2020–21 to 2024–25, Scheduled Caste beneficiaries will receive a subsidy covering 60% of the unit cost. Interested applicants are required to contact their respective Taluk Fisheries Assistant Director offices and submit applications by January 10. For more details, they may contact the Deputy Director of Fisheries at 9844466228, Assistant Directors for Bagepalli, Chikkaballapur, Chelur and Gudibande taluks at 7676759249, and for Chintamani, Gauribidanur, Manchenahalli and Sidlaghatta taluks at 9740909438.

PROTEST AGAINST HONOR KILLING

Protest demands strict action against honor killing

KANAKAGIRI

The Karnataka Progressive Organizations Federation has demanded stringent legal action against those who instigated the recent honor killing in Inam Veerapur village of Hubballi taluk, Dharwad district. Federation taluk president Pamanna Araliganur submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah through the Tahsildar Vishwanath Murudi and condemned the brutal incident.

He said that Vivekananda and Manya, a young couple from the village, had fallen in love and got married about eight months ago despite opposition from the woman's family. On December 8, when the couple visited Inam Veerapur, members of Manya's family, allegedly encouraged by a few villagers, murdered their daughter, who was seven months pregnant. He termed the killing inhuman and shocking.

Even as Manya reportedly pleaded for help, no one came forward to save her, he said, calling it a shameful reflection on society. He warned that caste-based hatred is increasing in Karnataka and is gradually turning into a dangerous form of "caste terrorism." Saints like Basavanna and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar clearly advocated inter-caste marriages as a solution to caste discrimination, he reminded, lamenting that such progressive ideals are being rejected even in this modern era.

Dalit leader Sanna Hanumanth said such incidents destroy the very foundation of a humane society. He cautioned that rising cases of parents killing their own children in the name of family honor is deeply disturbing and may one day be wrongly glorified as social prestige if not stopped immediately.

Leaders including Lingappa Poojari, Hanumanthappa Basarigida, Sheshappa Poojari, Neelakanta Badiger and others were present.

QUICK READ

Applications for financial aid extended to January 9

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Kannada and Culture has extended the deadline for submitting applications for various financial aid schemes under the General, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe sub-programmes to January 9, 2026. Applications must be submitted online only through the SevaSindhu portal (sevasindhu.karnataka.gov.in). The schemes aim to support registered cultural organizations and artists in promoting the state's language, arts, literature, music, folk traditions, and dance forms. Financial assistance includes funding for purchasing musical instruments, costumes, and organizing exhibitions of paintings, sculptures, and handicrafts.

Millet cooking competition held in Chikkaballapur

Millets' resilience and health benefits are highlighted as India leads global millet cultivation, encouraging women farmers in Chikkaballapur

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Millets are gaining global prominence, and India holds a leading position in cultivating diverse millet varieties, said Joint Agriculture Director S.S. Aabid in Chikkaballapur. Speaking at the launch of the district-level Millet Cooking Competition under the National Food and Nutritional Security Programme for 2025–26, he said millets are not just traditional crops but highly resilient and beneficial for both farmers and consumers. Unlike crops that demand fertile land, millets grow well even in thin-soil regions and rocky fields, making them a boon for farmers with challenging agricultural conditions.

He encouraged women farmers to cultivate millets as they require lower investment, minimal use of chemical fertilizers and face very few pest issues. Beyond agriculture, millets are also powerful for public health, he said. In today's changing lifestyle, rising cases of heart disease, paralysis, hypertension, and diabetes have weakened people's health. Millet-based foods, rich in essential nutrients like magnesium, copper, phosphorus and manganese, provide higher nutritional benefits than many commonly consumed foods. They are low in calories, help reduce body weight, control cholesterol levels and prevent fat accumulation, making them vital for a healthy life.

During the cooking competition, 69 farmers and farm women from various taluks prepared a wide variety of millet dishes including laddus, payasa, biscuits, biryani, chakuli, jilebi, sajje preparations and several forgotten traditional recipes.

Food scientist Dr. Soumya highlighted that millets are gluten-free and protect the body from chronic illnesses while maintaining balanced health.

The programme was attended by agriculture officials, technical staff and farmers from across the district, who appreciated the nutritional and economic value of millet cultivation.

Fulfilling the aspirations of people is my responsibility: MLA

BIDAR

Bidar South MLA Dr Shailendra Beldale chaired a village meeting in Udbal to address civic issues and review development works.

Dr. Shailendra Beldale, MLA of Bidar South constituency, chaired a village meeting in Udbal in the presence of active local residents to address issues related to infrastructure, drinking water, roads, electricity, sanitation, health, and education.

Speaking to the villagers, Dr. Beldale emphasized that fulfilling public aspirations and serving the people with honesty is his primary responsibility. Several minor issues raised during the meeting were resolved on the spot, while the remaining requests were documented, with assurances of speedy redressal. He urged the community to actively participate in village development initiatives.

The MLA also visited government schools in the village to review ongoing construction work and interact with students to understand their educational needs.

In addition, Dr. Beldale inaugurated the construction of a ₹10 lakh community hall near the Shri Mallikarjuna temple, providing instructions to officials and contractors to ensure timely and quality completion.

Officials present at the meeting included Tahsildar Manjunath Panchal, TASP Executive Officer Lakshmi Biradar, Gram Panchayat Development Officer, departmental officers, Grampanchayat President and members, and other village leaders.

Dr. Beldale reiterated that planning and implementing development programs for rural areas, while addressing public concerns, remains his responsibility, and he is committed to working tirelessly day and night for the welfare of the people.

His media coordinator, Nagesh Sidda, was also present to oversee communications and public engagement during the visit.

Girijamma Guruvegowda elected as Deputy Mayor

RAMANAGARA

In a smooth and uncontested election held on Tuesday, Congress corporator Girijamma Guruvēgowda from the 17th Ward was elected as the Deputy Mayor of Ramanagara City Municipal Council.

The election was necessitated following the resignation of Ayisha Banu fifteen days ago. The polling process began at 11:30 AM, and since Girijamma Guruvēgowda was the sole candidate, Sub-Divisional Officer Binoy, overseeing the election, declared her elected unopposed.

Supporters celebrated her victory by bursting crackers and distributing sweets. Addressing the gathering, Girijamma expressed gratitude to party leaders, including DCM D.K. Shivakumar, former MP and BMU president D.K. Suresh, former MLA C.M. Lingappa, MLA Iqbal Hussain, and City Council Mayor K. Sheshadri, for their guidance and support.

She assured that, alongside the Mayor, she would focus on city development, prioritizing basic infrastructure while consulting all council members to ensure collaborative progress. Notably, most JD(S) members abstained from the Deputy Mayor election. With Congress holding a clear majority in the 31-member council, the result was largely anticipated. JD(S) members' absence had no impact on the outcome. Girijamma Guruvēgowda was formally congratulated by Mayor K. Sheshadri, TP-CMS president Doddi Suresh, and other party leaders and workers. Present at the felicitation were City Standing Committee Chair Pairoj Pash, members Parvatamma, Ayisha Banu, Pavitra, Vijayakumari, Nizamuddin, Daulat Sharif, Aklin, Azmat, Mutturaju, Govindraju, Narasimha, Samad, Annu, Bhairēgowda, and several others, marking a festive and unified celebration within the council.

Job fair in Chitradurga scheduled on January 30

CHITRADURGA

A job fair will be held on January 30, 2026, at the Government Arts College (Autonomous),Chitradurga to provide employment opportunities for youth, said District Panchayat CEO Dr. S. Akash. Addressing a preparatory meeting at the District Panchayat Mini Hall, he stated that the fair is being organized with support from Sanjeevini-KSRLPS-DDU-GKY, the District Panchayat NRLM, and the District Skill Development Department. Sub-committees have been formed, and their heads have been instructed to begin necessary preparations immediately to ensure the fair's success.

Dr. Akash emphasized that colleges, vocational training institutes, and beneficiaries of the Yuva Nidhi scheme should be informed about the fair. A separate web link will be created for registration of employers and job seekers, along with extensive promotion to ensure wide participation.

Officials present included District Panchayat Chief Project Officer C.S. Gayathri, Project Director K. Jayalakshmi, Chief Accounts Officer D.R. Madhu, District Skill Development Officer Vemanna, District Employment Officer Ravichandra, GTTC Principal Suhas, and representatives from degree, ITI, and engineering colleges, along with other departmental officials.

The CEO highlighted that thorough planning, active coordination, and awareness campaigns are crucial for the success of the employment fair, enabling youth to access diverse career opportunities.

SCP-TSP MEETING

SC/ST commission chairman emphasizes swift action against atrocities

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Dr. L. Murthy, Chairman of the Karnataka State Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission, presided over a progress review meeting for SC/ST welfare at the Sir M. Visvesvaraya Hall, organized in collaboration with the district administration. During the session, he received grievances from the public and community leaders, discussing several critical issues affecting SC/ST communities.

Dr. Murthy emphasized that any act of oppression, violence, or exploitation against individuals or communities from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be met with immediate legal action. Citizens can directly approach the Commission to lodge complaints, and the Commission actively works to safeguard their rights.

Key concerns raised during the meeting included land records, tenancy, cremation grounds, deemed forest areas, community halls, SC/ST development programs (SCP and TSP), and illegal liquor sales. The Chairman instructed authorities to promptly address these complaints and ensure quick resolution.

Following the public grievance session, a detailed review of fund allocations to various areas of the district was conducted. Officials were urged to prioritize the protection of SC/ST civil rights, provide quality education, and ensure the social empowerment of these communities.

The meeting was attended by District Commissioner Ravindra P.N., Commission members M. Kumbayya, Secretary Dr. H.S. Shivaram, District Panchayat CEO Dr. Naveen Bhat, Deputy Superintendent of Police Kushal Chaukse, sub-divisional officers, tehsildars, Assistant Director Srinivas from the Commission, and Deputy Directors from the Department of Social Welfare.

The gathering underscored the Commission's commitment to ensuring justice, equality, and empowerment for SC/ST communities in Karnataka.

NAME CHANGE

I, **SYED ASIF PASHA** , S/o, Syed Siddiq Sahib, Resident of No,4212/1, Near Madina Masjid Extension Mohalla Ramanagaram Dist, 562159, have changed my name to **SYED ASIF**, vide affidavit dated: 30.12.2025 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, DILIP S/o K B RAJ, R/o No 2, Sair Elite 401, 4th Floor, Edward Road, Bangalore North, Bangalore G.P.O, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DILIP KUMAR.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ELAVEGOWDA S/o MUDLIGIRIGOWDA, R/o Hallimysore Hobli, Holenarasipura Talluku, Doddahalli, Hassan, Karnataka-573210, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RANGEGOWDA.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, UMESH V M S/o V K MANJUNATHA R/o B H Road, Rural Police Station, Opposite Holenarsipur, Hassan, Karnataka-573211, have changed the name of my minor daughter MONISHA aged 13 years and she shall hereafter be known as MANASVI U GOWDA.

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer,
C.V. Ramannagara Division, 8th Cross, 12th A Main Road,
HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagara, Bengaluru - 560038.

No:EE/CVR/TEND-03/CORRIGENDUM-1/2025-26 Date: 30-12-2025

CORRIGENDUM-01

Sub: Regarding the Notification of Postponed Dates for the Tender Process.

Ref.: 1) Tender Notification No: EE/CVR/TEND/03/2025-26, Dated: 16-12-2025.
2) Reference (1) Tenders have been invited through e-Procurement for the work of Demolition of Unauthorized Building Parts of C.V. Ramannagara Division, but the said Tender dates have been Postponed Due to Technical Issues.

Revised Calendar of Events: 1) Tender Documents Submission of through e-Procurement Website on **08-01-2026 before 4.00 PM. 2)** Date of Opening of Technical Tender: **09-01-2026 at 4.30 PM.** Further details can be obtained from the above office during working hours and can also be obtained from the Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, C.V. Ramannagara Division, BCCC.

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
O/o The Chief Engineer, KUWS&D Board, Mysuru zonal office,
"Jalabhavan", # P-4, 10th Main, 3rd Cross, 3rd Floor, Saraswathipuram
Mysuru-570 009. Ph no: 0821-2545894, **Email:** kwbcemys2014@gmail.com

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION-(Call-2)

Tender for the work of Providing UGD facilities to ward No. 11 & 17 of Pandavapura Town under SCP grants of Pandavapura town for the year 2025-26 (Lumpsum Tender - No Variation) is invited vide indent No: **KUWSDB/2025-26/WS/WORK_INDENT460/Call-2**
For details: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER
K.U.W.S & D BOARD, MYSURU

DIPR/MYS/KAVITA/1444/25-26

(CH) CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

NAME CHANGE

I, **AKHILA SANDEEP**, W/o. Sandeep Reganti Venkatachalapathy, Resident of No. 1, 9th Cross, 11th Main Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru -560052, Karnataka, have changed my name to **AKHILA K N**, vide affidavit dated: 29.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MOHAMED ANVER** Resident of No.10/1, Lal Masjid A Street Shivajinagar Bengaluru-560051, have changed my name to **MOHAMMED ANWER** Vide Affidavit Dated: 30.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MADHAVA VEERABHADRAPPA HADIMANE**, S/o. Veerabhadrappa, Resident of Purva Highland Kanakapura Road, Near Nice Road, Konanakunte, Mallasandra, Konanakunte Post, Bengaluru -560062, Karnataka, have changed my name to **MADAV H V**, vide affidavit dated: 29.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **JAYASREE SAMPATH SHETTY CHITHAPORAM**, W/o. Pandu Rangiah Shetty, Resident of Balaji Nivas, Vasavi Dharmashala Street, N R Extension, Chintamani, Chikballapur -563125, Karnataka, have changed my name to **JAYASREE TALANKI PANDURANGIAHSHETTY**, vide affidavit dated: 30.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಬಾಶೆಟ್ಟಿಹಳ್ಳಿ
ಬಾಶೆಟ್ಟಿಹಳ್ಳಿ, ಕಸಬಾ ಹೋಬಳಿ, ದೊಡ್ಡಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ.
itstaff.ulb.bashettihalli 1@gmail.com

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಬಾ.ಪ.ಪಂ/ತಾಂ.ಶಾಂ/ಸಿ.ಆರ್/07&08/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 14.11.2025

ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಮರು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುವ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನೊಂದಾಯಿತ ಅರ್ಹ ದರ್ಜೆಯ ಸಿವಿಲ್ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ ದ್ವಿ–ಲಕೋಟೆ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಷರತ್ತುಗಳಿಗೊಳಪಟ್ಟು ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಮರು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ವಿವರ	ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)	ಇ.ಎಂಡಿ. (ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)
01	DMA/2025-26/ BD/ WORK_ INDENT 50267/CALL-2	90.00	1.52,400/-
02	DMA/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 50083/CALL-2	202.30	2.50,000/-

ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಫಾರಂ ಬೆಲೆ– ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂಮೆಂಟ್‌ನಂತೆ (1) ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: (A) ಕ್ರಮ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 01 ರ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.11.2025 17.00 (B) ಕ್ರಮ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 02 ರ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 29.11.2025 17.00 (2) ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: (A) ಕ್ರಮ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 01 ರ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 24.11.2025 ರ 17.30 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ (B) ಕ್ರಮ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 02 ರ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 01.12.2025 ರ 17.30 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಕಾರಣಾಂತರಗಳಿಂದ ಯಾವುದೇ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಗಳಾದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಇ–ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾತ್ರ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ದಿನಪತ್ರಿಕೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ, ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಗಮನಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಹಿ/–
ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ. ವಿಭಾ ವಿದ್ಯಾ ರಾಥೋಡ್
ತಹಶೀಲ್ದಾರ್ ದೊಡ್ಡಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ ಹಾಗೂ ಆಡಳಿತಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು
ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ, ಬಾಶೆಟ್ಟಿಹಳ್ಳಿ

ಸಹಿ/–
ಶ್ರೀ ನರಸಿಂಹಮೂರ್ತಿ. ಪಿ ಕೆ.ಎಂ.ಎ.ಎಸ್
ಮುಖ್ಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿ
ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ಬಾಶೆಟ್ಟಿಹಳ್ಳಿ

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಾ.ಪ್ರ/3817/ಶಿರಡಿ ಸಾಯಿ/2024–25

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ,
ಮಂಡ್ಯ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಕೆ.ಆರ್.ರಸ್ತೆ, ಸುಭಾಷ್ ನಗರ, ಮಂಡ್ಯ,
ದೂ: 08232–297199,
ಇ–ಮೇಲ್ –sskmandya@gmail.com
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಸಶಿಕ/ಸಿ2/ಕೆಜಿಬಿವಿ ಟೈ–1& ಟೈ–4 ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ನಿಲಯ
ಅಲ್ಪಾವದಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್/08ಎ/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:19.12.2025

ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ವರ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ ಅನ್ವಯವಾಗುವಂತೆ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊರಡಿಸಲಾಗದ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ವಿವರ.
ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ. : 01. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ವಿವರ : ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಮತ್ತು ಬ್ಲಾಕ್ ಹಂತಕ್ಕೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 35 ಹೊರಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾನವ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಲು. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ರೆಫರೆನ್ಸ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : DPI/2025/SE0416. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಇಟ್ಟ ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ) : 90,93,312=00.
ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ. : 02. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ವಿವರ : ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಕೆ.ಜಿ.ಬಿ.ವಿ ಟೈಪ್–1 ಎರಡು (02) ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಕೆ.ಜಿ.ಬಿ.ವಿ ಟೈಪ್–4 ಎರಡು (02) ವಸತಿ ನಿಲಯಗಳಿಗೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 18 ಅರೆಕಾಲಿಕ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿ ಸೇವೆ. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ರೆಫರೆನ್ಸ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : DPI/2025/SE0417. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಇಟ್ಟ ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ) : 32,43,000–00
ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿಯ ಇ–ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಲು ಆಸಕ್ತಿವುಳ್ಳ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ದಾರರು http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in ,ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯೂಮೆಂಟ್‌ನ್ನು ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು ನಿಗದಿತ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ನೋಡಲ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿರವರ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 9448739714.

ಸಹಿ/–ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು (ಆಡಳಿತ) ಹಾಗೂ ಪದನಿಮಿತ್ತ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಯೋಜನಾ ಸಮನ್ವಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು, ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಮಂಡ್ಯ

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ಹಿಸಸಿ–ಮಂ/ಕೆಎಸ್‌ಎಂಸಿ&ಎ/677/2025–26

QUICK READ

Telangana Records Slight Drop in Crime Rate

Hyderabad

Telangana saw a small fall in crime in 2025, with total cases at 2.29 lakh, down 2.33% from 2.34 lakh last year, DGP B Shivadhar Reddy said. Over 500 CPI (Maoist) members, including central and state leaders, surrendered during the year. BNS cases fell 1.45% to 1.67 lakh. Kidnap cases dropped nearly 25% to 1,145, and rape cases fell over 13% to 2,549. Cybercrime also declined by 3%, while national cybercrime rose 41%, the DGP added.

Six Hospitalised After Kerala Music Festival Rush

Kasaragod

Six people were hospitalised for breathing problems after a large crowd surge at a beach music festival in Bekal on December 29, police said. The situation was quickly controlled, and all affected were discharged from the hospital the same night. Police clarified that reports of multiple injuries were false and urged the public not to believe rumours. Authorities assured that no one was seriously hurt and the festival area remained safe after timely intervention.

Air India Express pilot arrested for assault at IGI Airport

New Delhi

Delhi Police arrested an off-duty Air India Express pilot, Captain Virendra Sejwal, for allegedly assaulting a passenger at IGI Airport on December 19. The police collected CCTV footage and recorded statements during the investigation before making the arrest. Sejwal had earlier joined the probe and was questioned. He has been booked under Sections 115 (voluntarily causing hurt), 126 (wrongful restraint), and 351 (criminal intimidation) of the BNS for the incident near Terminal 1's security checkpoint.

PM Modi Urges Diplomacy after Reported Putin Residence Attack

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy called Russia's attack claims false, stressing diplomacy while Trump hosts ongoing peace talks

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over reports of an attack on Russian President Vladimir Putin's residence, calling for focused diplomatic efforts.

PM Modi, in a post on X, highlighted the need for all parties to avoid actions that could derail ongoing peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. "Deeply concerned by reports of the targeting of the President of the Russian Federation's residence. Ongoing diplomatic efforts offer the most viable path toward ending hostilities and achieving peace," he wrote.

The remarks follow Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's announcement that Ukraine carried out a drone attack on Putin's Novgorod residence on December 29, deploying 91 UAVs. Lavrov claimed all drones were intercepted without causing damage or casualties, warning that Russia would respond and that retaliatory measures had been planned. Despite the incident, he confirmed that Russia would continue negotiations but would review its stance.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed Lavrov's claims as "fabrications" and insisted Ukraine would not undermine diplomacy. He said the alleged attack report aimed to justify further Russian attacks, including on Kyiv, and to distract from Moscow's failure to end the war.

The situation comes amid ongoing peace talks hosted by former US President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago, where he met Zelenskyy to continue efforts toward ending the four-year conflict.

PM Modi's call reinforces the importance of diplomatic solutions, urging restraint and collaboration to achieve lasting peace and prevent escalation, amid heightened tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

President Returns Tamil Nadu University Bill

CHENNAI

President Droupadi Murmu has returned the Tamil Nadu University of Madras Amendment Bill, which aimed to give the state government the power to appoint its vice chancellor, officials said on Tuesday. The bill, passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly in April 2022, was sent for presidential assent to allow the state to take control of the 168-year-old university, which has been without a vice chancellor for over two years.

The proposed amendment sought to change the University of Madras Act by replacing the word "chancellor" with "government," transferring the authority to appoint and remove the vice chancellor from the governor, who currently serves as ex-officio chancellor, to the state government. The President returned the bill for reconsideration, citing concerns over potential conflict with University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations and established norms for appointing vice chancellors.

Earlier, Governor R N Ravi had reserved the bill for presidential consideration, pointing out similar concerns. Following its return, the assembly must now review and reconsider the legislation before moving forward.

Currently, about 14 of the 22 universities in Tamil Nadu, including the University of Madras, are being managed by convenor committees due to the absence of regular vice chancellors. The state government had intended the amendment to streamline appointments, but the presidential decision marks a significant setback for the Stalin administration, requiring careful reassessment of the proposed changes.

Trinamool Congress slammed Amit Shah's "two-thirds majority" claim, asserting BJP will not cross 50 seats in West Bengal elections

Trinamool Congress Hits Back at Amit Shah's Election Claims

KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) strongly rebutted Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday, calling his statements about the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections baseless. Senior TMC leader and state education minister Bratya Basu told reporters that Shah's claim of a two-thirds majority was hollow and that BJP would fail to cross the 50-seat mark. "Shah will keep coming and going like a tourist. Such visits will serve no purpose," Basu said.

Shah had claimed the BJP would form the next government in Bengal after April 15, 2026, adding that infiltrators would be identified and removed. He also criticised the TMC government over women's safety, saying women should be able to step out freely without fear, and described the state's condition as unacceptable.

Responding, TMC minister Sashi Panja urged Shah to witness Bengal during festive seasons when women move about freely. She accused him and the BJP of shielding accused criminals and obstructing the Aparajita Bill, which aimed for stricter punishment for rapists. Panja also rejected Shah's claims about industrial decline, stating that Bengal received Rs 13.8 lakh-crore in investment since 2011 and ranks second in the MSME sector.

TMC spokesperson Jay Prakash Majumdar dismissed Shah's claim that BJP does not indulge in temple-based politics, citing their campaigns in 2019 and 2024. Majumdar added that such politics would again be rejected by Bengal's electorate.

The TMC's response highlights its firm stance against BJP's assertions, reiterating confidence in its governance record, women's safety measures, and industrial growth, while calling Shah's statements exaggerated and misleading.

Sri Lankan Envoy Praises India's Support during Cyclone

NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India, Mahishini Colonne, on Tuesday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership and India's swift assistance during Cyclone Ditwah. She described him as "an important voice of the Global South" and a "highly respected leader," noting his consistent support to Sri Lanka in times of crisis.

Colonne recalled PM Modi's visit to Sri Lanka after the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks, which helped restore tourism and strengthen the economy. Highlighting India's role during Cyclone Ditwah, she said helicopters, relief supplies, doctors, and medical aid were deployed within hours, demonstrating India's multidimensional support. Operation Sagar Bandhu, she noted, began while the cyclone was still active, and India continues to assist in rebuilding infrastructure and providing relief to affected communities.

"The cyclone has passed, basic services and connectivity have been restored, and India's assistance has been significant in all phases of recovery," Colonne said. She emphasised India's long-standing partnership, describing the country as a trusted and consistent partner for Sri Lanka.

Raihan Vadra to Get Engaged in Pvt Ceremony

NEW DELHI

Preparations are quietly underway for the engagement of Raihan Vadra, son of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and businessman Robert Vadra, to his longtime partner Aviva Baig. Sources close to the family said the ceremony will be a private, low-key affair in Rajasthan, likely in early January 2026, lasting two to three days and coordinated to suit family schedules.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Robert Vadra, and other family members have already reached Sawai Madhopur, staying at Hotel Sher Bagh near Ranthambore National Park. The family plans to combine the engagement celebrations with New Year festivities, keeping the event intimate and away from public attention.

Sri Lankan Navy Detains Indian Fishermen Again

CHENNAI

Tension rose in Rameswaram on Tuesday after the Sri Lankan Navy arrested three Indian fishermen and seized their trawler, alleging illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters. The detained fishermen, identified as Rooban, Nagarajan, and Prabhu, had left Rameswaram harbour late Monday night with official clearance. Their boat was intercepted near Neduntheevu (Delft Island) and taken to Karainagar Naval Base in northern Sri Lanka.

Authorities said 415 fishing tokens had been issued on Monday, allowing fishermen to venture into the sea. News of the arrests spread quickly, causing anxiety among families awaiting the return of their relatives. V.P. Jesu Raja, a leader of the Rameswaram fishermen's association, condemned the detentions, saying repeated arrests left the community distressed and insecure.

"This is the third such incident in less than two weeks. Over 13 fishermen have been detained, and three trawlers seized in the past 15 days. Earlier detainees were released only after paying hefty fines, creating severe financial strain," Jesu Raja said.

He urged both India and Sri Lanka to hold serious talks to find a lasting solution and appealed to the Union government to intervene promptly to secure the release of the fishermen and their boats. The repeated arrests highlight the ongoing challenges faced by Tamil Nadu fishermen in the sensitive Palk Strait region, affecting their livelihoods and safety.

Four Dead, Dozen Injured in Maihar Road Accident

MAIHAR

A severe road accident on National Highway-30 in Maihar, Madhya Pradesh, claimed four lives and left at least 12 people injured, officials said. The crash occurred near Tiloura village under Nadan police station when a passenger vehicle carrying members of the Patel family from Padariya village in Katni district rammed into the rear of a container truck at high speed.

The front of the vehicle was completely crushed. Three passengers died on the spot, while a fourth succumbed to injuries later in hospital. The deceased have been identified as Chhonga Patel (60), Jitendra Payasi (24), Santlal Patel, and another yet-to-be-identified passenger. At least five of the injured, including Jagdish Patel, Ram Sahay Patel, and Mangi Bai Patel, are in critical condition.

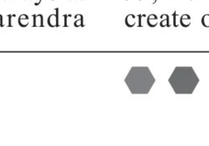
The family was travelling to Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, to immerse the ashes of a deceased relative, making the accident particularly tragic for the extended Patel family. A police team, with help from local residents, rescued those trapped in the mangled vehicle. The injured were initially taken to Maihar Civil Hospital, with critically injured patients referred to Satna and others shifted to Katni for specialised treatment.

The family was travelling to Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, to immerse the ashes of a deceased relative, making the accident particularly tragic for the extended Patel family.

Police have registered a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Motor Vehicles Act. Preliminary investigation indicates that overspeeding may have been a major factor, while officials are also examining visibility conditions and possible mechanical issues. The tragedy has left the local community grieving and raised concerns about road safety on the busy highway.

Shah Promises End to Fear and Misgovernance

KOLKATA



Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday urged the people of West Bengal to give the BJP a chance to govern, promising to replace "fear, corruption, and misgovernance" with good governance. Speaking in Kolkata, Shah positioned the BJP as a strong alternative to the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and other past governments.

Shah accused TMC chief Mamata Banerjee of allowing infiltration of Bangladeshis for electoral gains. He said the BJP would identify and remove infiltrators once in power. He also criticised the state government for delaying border fencing, claiming West Bengal was not providing the required land. On economic issues, Shah alleged that misgovernance had led to industrial decline in the state. He further accused the TMC of spreading fear and violence, stating that over 300 BJP workers had been killed and more than 3,000 remained unable to return to their homes due to political pressure.

Highlighting corruption, Shah said several senior TMC leaders had faced jail for swindling public funds, claiming that even the machinery used to count seized cash reportedly malfunctioned from overheating.

SOCIAL COVERAGE

India Achieves Major Social Protection Milestone

NEW DELHI

India's social protection coverage has jumped to 64.3 per cent in 2025 from 19 per cent in 2015, placing the country second globally after China. This growth comes after the expansion of welfare schemes and recent labour reforms aimed at enhancing workers' security.

India received the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Award 2025 for 'Outstanding Achievement in Social Security' in Malaysia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY) on August 15, 2025, with a Rs 99,446 crore outlay, aiming to create over 3.5 crore jobs in two years, including 1.92 crore first-time workers. Over 2.35 lakh establishments have registered on the PMVBRY portal, benefitting more than 20.7 lakh first-time employees.

The government consolidated 29 labour laws into four Labour Codes covering wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety. These reforms simplify compliance, extend social protection to unorganized, gig, and platform workers, and strengthen workplace safety, especially for women and migrants.

Social security enhancements include digital systems for EPFO claims up to Rs 5 lakh, a centralised pension system, and easier UAN activation. ESIC has expanded to 713 districts with 87,715 hospital beds, and launched SPREE 2025 for new registrations without retrospective penalties.

The PMVBRY scheme provides first-time employees one month's wage up to Rs 15,000, while employers receive incentives for creating additional jobs, especially in manufacturing. These initiatives aim to boost employment, income security, and social protection, reinforcing India's position as a global leader in welfare coverage.

QUICK READ

Seven Dead, Eleven Injured in Uttarakhand Bus Crash

Dehradun

Seven people died and 11 were injured when a passenger bus from Dwarahat to Ramnagar fell into a steep ravine in Almora district on Tuesday morning. The 19-passenger bus lost control near Salapani, Bhikiyainsain area, shortly after Vinayak. Locals described the fall as sudden and terrifying. Rescue teams, with villagers' help, saved survivors and took the injured to Bhikiyainsain Hospital. Officials are investigating the cause, which may involve driver error or a technical fault. CM Dhami expressed condolences.

Dense Fog Forces Flight Disruptions at Delhi Airport

New Delhi

Dense fog on Tuesday disrupted operations at Indira Gandhi International Airport, cancelling 118 flights and diverting 16 others. Over 130 flights faced delays, with an average departure hold of 28 minutes. Poor visibility affected 60 arrivals and 58 departures. Flights without CAT III technology could not land safely. Diverted flights were sent to nearby airports, while authorities instructed airlines to assist passengers during the weather. Airport operations continued amid efforts to manage the chaos.

NIA Charges Five for Supplying Explosives to Naxals

New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed charges against five people, including four absconders, in a 2024 case of supplying explosives to the banned CPI (Maoist) group in Chhattisgarh. Manish Sodhi, arrested in July, and fugitives Sodhi Kesa, Manila, Madkam Kesa, and Sodhi Lakhma, all from Sukma district, were named in the chargesheet. So far, the NIA has chargesheeted seven individuals in connection with the case, which involves illegal procurement and distribution of explosives to Naxals.

Jal Minister Launches Digital Tool for Village Water Services

With numerous Gram Panchayats achieving Har Ghar Jal, the mission now provides reliable daily water via community oversight

NEW DELHI

Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil on Tuesday launched a new digital tool, Jal Seva Aankalan, to help Gram Panchayats assess drinking water services. The initiative aims to strengthen service delivery and encourage community ownership under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).

Addressing the gathering, Patil emphasized that JJM is not just about creating water infrastructure but ensuring reliable drinking water for every rural household. He highlighted four key pillars of the Mission: Political Will, People's Participation, Stakeholder Collaboration, and Optimal Resource Use, with Jan Bhagidari (public participation) being the most crucial for sustainability.

Jal Seva Aankalan empowers Gram Panchayats to manage their own water systems and enhances democratic decision-making through Gram Sabhas. The tool helps identify gaps in service delivery early, allowing timely corrective action, and shifts focus from mere infrastructure creation to consistent, quality water services.

With many Gram Panchayats having achieved Har Ghar Jal status, the mission now prioritizes translating tap connections into safe, dependable daily water supply. The community-owned self-assessment model reduces reliance on costly third-party surveys and enables villages to collectively monitor and improve water service systems.

The launch event saw the presence of Ministers of State for Jal Shakti V. Somanna and Raj Bhushan Choudhary, senior DDWS officials, state representatives, Panchayat Secretaries, Sarpanches, and Village Water and Sanitation Committee members. Around 10,000 representatives of Har Ghar Jal Gram Panchayats from across the country participated virtually, reflecting strong nationwide engagement.

Patil concluded that sustainable drinking water supply can be achieved only through active community participation, transparency, and local ownership, making Gram Panchayats the central custodians of the mission's success.

Procurement Period Extended for Moong, Udd Crops

NEW DELHI

Farmers in Karnataka get more time to sell moong, Udd, soybean, groundnut, and sunflower at support prices under extended procurement period.

The central government has approved an extension of the procurement period for moong (green gram) grown in Karnataka during the 2025-26 Kharif season under the Price Support Scheme (PSS). The extension now also applies to other crops, including soybean, groundnut, Udd bean, and sunflower.

This move ensures farmers receive fair support prices and provides them additional time to sell their produce. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan informed Minister Prahlad Joshi about the extension through an official letter.

Earlier, Prahlad Joshi had requested the Union Agriculture Minister to extend the procurement period for moong, Udd, and other crops under the support price scheme. The central government accepted the request and issued the formal order extending the Price Support Scheme period.

Expressing his gratitude, Prahlad Joshi thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan for approving the extension. Officials said this step would greatly benefit farmers by allowing them more flexibility in marketing their crops while ensuring minimum support prices are maintained.

With this extension, farmers across Karnataka can now plan the sale of their moong, Udd, soybean, groundnut, and sunflower crops without the pressure of deadlines, strengthening income security and stabilizing market access. The government continues to encourage timely procurement to support agricultural sustainability and protect farmers' interests.

The extension highlights the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring farmers get the benefits of the Price Support Scheme while promoting balanced crop marketing and price stability during the Kharif season.

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee firmly disputed Amit Shah's infiltration and Central project claims, defending her government

Mamata Banerjee Slams BJP over Infiltration, Projects Claims

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday hit back at Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claims about infiltration, asking how attacks like the Pahalgam strike and the Delhi car blast occurred if infiltrators were allegedly entering only through West Bengal. Speaking at a public meeting in Barjora, Bankura district, Banerjee described Shah as "Dushasana," accusing him of visiting the state with harmful intentions and aiming to destabilize Bengal.

Refuting claims that her government protected infiltrators, Banerjee said, "If infiltrators only enter from West Bengal, who carried out Pahalgam attack? Who was behind Delhi incident?" She dismissed allegations that her administration denied land for Central projects, citing examples in Bongaon's Petrapole, Andal airport, and Eastern Coalfield Limited, calling the accusations false.

Banerjee also criticized Shah's repeated assertions that BJP would form the next state government. She accused the party of manipulating voter lists through Special Intensive Revision, noting at least 58 people have already lost their lives in related incidents. She condemned efforts to remove names from electoral rolls targeting Matua, minority, and Hindu communities.

Highlighting her roots, Banerjee emphasized she was born in Birbhum and rejected attempts to label her as Bangladeshi. She stressed that her government prioritizes the welfare of Bengal's people, while BJP's actions focus on political gains and creating fear. Banerjee's remarks reflect her firm stance against what she termed misleading narratives, defending her administration's track record in governance, land allotments, and public safety.

8 Police Officials Granted Bail in Kupwara Case

SRINAGAR

The principal district and sessions judge of Kupwara on Tuesday granted bail to eight police personnel accused in a high-profile custodial torture case, investigated by the CBI on Supreme Court directions. The accused include Deputy SP Aijaz Ahmad, Sub-Inspector Riyaz Ahmad Mir, SPO Jahangeer Ahmad Beigh, Head Constables Mohammad Younis Khan and Tanveer Ahmad Malla, Selection Grade Constables Shakir Hussain Khoja and Altaf Hussain Bhat, and Constable Shahnawaz Ahmad. All were arrested by the CBI in August and lodged in central jail.

The court directed each accused to submit personal and surety bonds of Rs 1 lakh and imposed strict conditions. They cannot leave the court's territorial jurisdiction without permission, must surrender any passports, avoid influencing witnesses or tampering with evidence, and attend all trial proceedings unless exempted. Any violation may lead to bail cancellation.

The case involves the alleged illegal detention and custodial torture of police constable Khursheed Ahmad Chohan at the Joint Interrogation Centre in Kupwara. The Supreme Court transferred the probe to the CBI, terming it a grave example of abuse of power. It also directed the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to pay Rs 50 lakh as compensation to the victim, recoverable from guilty officers after departmental proceedings.

ED Attaches Rs 68 Crore Assets in Chhattisgarh Liquor Scam

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached properties worth Rs 68.16 crore of three major Chhattisgarh-based distilleries in connection with the state liquor scam. The move targets Chhattisgarh Distilleries Ltd (CDL), Bhatia Wine Merchants Pvt Ltd (BWMPL), and Welcome Distilleries Pvt Ltd (WDPL), bringing the total attachment against the three companies to Rs 96.55 crore. The action was taken under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, by the ED's Raipur zonal office.

ED's investigation revealed that the distilleries were central to a three-part corruption model. Part A involved inflating government procurement prices, with distillers paying illegal commissions of Rs 75–125 per case. Part B saw production of unaccounted liquor using fake holograms and illicit bottles, bypassing taxes and official warehouses. Part C involved annual bribes to maintain monopoly and fixed market shares. Between April 2019 and June 2022, the distilleries supplied over 60 lakh cases of such liquor to the syndicate.

The investigation, based on FIRs registered by Raipur Anti-Corruption Branch and Economic Offences Wing, found the scam caused massive losses to the state exchequer. Key figures included ex-IAS officer Anil Tuteja, Anwar Dhebar, Arun Pati Tripathi, and former Excise Minister Kawasi Lakhma. The scam reportedly generated over Rs 2,800 crore of illicit proceeds.

So far, the ED has attached assets worth more than Rs 380 crore and arrested several accused, including politicians, bureaucrats, and relatives of prominent leaders, highlighting the extensive scale of the corruption network.

Athawale Meets Darekar Over BMC Seat Dispute

MUMBAI

Athawale criticized BJP for sidelining RPI in the seat-sharing process. He said the alliance of BJP and Shiv Sena had affected his party's chances, with the RPI not even consulted during discussions.

Union Minister and RPI (Athawale) chief Ramdas Athawale on Tuesday met BJP MLC Pravin Darekar at his Bandra residence amid growing discontent over seat-sharing in the Mahayuti alliance for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections. Earlier, Athawale had expressed displeasure at the allocation of only six seats to his party.

After the meeting, Athawale said Darekar conveyed a message from Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who had called him earlier. He added that the 39 candidates submitted by RPI (A) had already completed their nomination forms. Athawale requested Darekar to arrange a meeting with the Chief Minister on Wednesday to discuss fair seat allocation.

He also indicated willingness to negotiate with Deputy CM Eknath Shinde to secure additional seats from Shiv Sena's quota if possible. Athawale said the party will decide its future course only after talks with the CM, signaling that the issue remains unresolved.

Athawale criticized BJP for sidelining RPI in the seat-sharing process. He said the alliance of BJP and Shiv Sena had affected his party's chances, with the RPI not even consulted during discussions. "If we had been called for discussions, more seats could have been allocated. Last night at 2 am, we were informed about six seats," he said.

The Mahayuti had recently finalised its seat-sharing formula, with BJP contesting 137 seats and Shiv Sena 90. The Maharashtra State Election Commission announced elections for 29 municipal corporations, including Mumbai, Pune, and Pimpri-Chinchwad. Polling in Mumbai's 227 wards is scheduled for January 15, with counting on January 16.

Delhi Police Tightens Security Ahead Of New Year Celebrations

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police have intensified security around Connaught Place and India Gate ahead of New Year 2026 celebrations. A mock drill was conducted to test emergency preparedness, and strict timings for December 31 have been issued. The drill focused on Connaught Place's Inner Circle and Rajiv Chowk Metro Station, simulating a suspicious bag scenario. Teams from Delhi Police, dog squad, and bomb disposal squad responded swiftly, cordoning off the area and restricting public movement. The bag was later found safe.

DCP New Delhi Devesh Mehla said the exercise aimed to evaluate police readiness and response times during emergencies. "We conducted the mock drill to test our preparedness. Proper barricading, announcements, and rapid response procedures were followed," he stated. He added that Connaught Place and India Gate attract large crowds on December 31 and January 1, and sufficient security measures have been put in place.

To manage traffic and crowds, vehicular movement in Connaught Place will be restricted from 7 pm on December 31. Only vehicles with prior restaurant or bar reservations will be allowed, while pedestrians can enter freely. Restaurants and bars will operate under strict guidelines issued by authorities.

MP Water Award Faces Controversy over AI Images Allegation

BHOPAL

A political dispute has emerged in Madhya Pradesh after Congress accused the BJP-led state government of using AI-generated images to win a national water conservation award for Khandwa district. The district administration denied the allegations, calling them "baseless and misleading." Khandwa secured first place nationally under the Centre's Jal Sanchay, Jan Bhagidari campaign, receiving a Rs 2 crore cash prize at the sixth National Water Awards in New Delhi. Kaveshwar gram panchayat also won second prize in the best gram panchayat category. Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari alleged that AI-generated images were submitted to falsely show development works, claiming shallow pits were portrayed as wells.

DOG MANAGEMENT ROW

Kejriwal Slams BJP over Teachers' New Order

NEW DELHI

AAP National Convenor and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday criticised the BJP-led Delhi government over an alleged order asking schools, colleges, and stadiums to appoint Nodal Officers for stray dog management. Kejriwal claimed the directive insulted teachers and distracted them from educating children, saying, "AAP respected teachers, while BJP is bent on destroying everything."

The controversy arose after AAP Delhi President Saurabh Bharadwaj shared the order, stating schools must submit Nodal Officer details, including name, designation, contact number, and email. The notice reportedly covered government, aided, and unaided recognised schools, as well as sports complexes.

Kejriwal accused the BJP of prioritising absurd tasks over education and glorified AAP's past tenure in Delhi, highlighting teacher training, school improvements, and focus on children's education. He said the order reflects BJP's disregard for educational institutions.

However, Delhi government officials quickly dismissed the reports as "fake news," clarifying that no educational institution was asked to conduct a stray dog census. The notice, issued by the Caretaking Branch of the Delhi Directorate of Education, referred to the Supreme Court's November 7, 2025 order and a follow-up November 20 meeting focused on public safety measures. Schools and other institutions were only required to provide relevant data by November 26, 2025, for compliance with the SC directions, not to monitor stray dogs.

The government emphasised that the directive aimed at public safety and top-priority compliance with court instructions, and any claims linking it to counting stray dogs were misleading. Officials noted the clarification was issued to remove confusion caused by misinterpretation of the circular, ensuring accurate understanding among the public and institutions.

QUICK READ

BLF Claims Killing Soldiers In Balochistan Attacks

Balochistan
The Balochistan Liberation Front on Monday claimed that its fighters killed ten Pakistani soldiers in a series of attacks across the province. In a statement, the group said an army convoy was ambushed in Awaran district on December 28, killing eight personnel. It also reported attacks on military camps in Barkhan, Tump and Turbat using grenades and heavy weapons. Pakistani authorities have not confirmed the claims. The group said the actions were part of its ongoing armed campaign.

Torkham Border Closure Hits Workers' Livelihood Hard

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
The continued closure of the Torkham border has pushed daily-wage workers and porters into serious financial trouble. Many have lost their part-time jobs and are struggling to meet basic needs. Some workers are migrating to Punjab and Sindh in search of work, while others are borrowing money from relatives. Several families have stopped sending children to school. A few jobless workers are reportedly turning to drugs to deal with stress. One young porter said poverty forced him to quit studies and face sleepless nights.

South Korean President Lee Plans State Visit To China

Talks will stress economic cooperation, regional stability, North Korea dialogue, events in Shanghai, business meetings, and new agreements

SEOUL

South Korea prepares for a key diplomatic visit aimed at strengthening ties and easing regional challenges.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung will make a state visit to China early next week for summit talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, officials said on Tuesday. Lee will leave for Beijing on Sunday and hold talks with Xi, before travelling to Shanghai on Tuesday and returning home on Wednesday. This will be Lee's first visit to China since taking office in June and the first such state visit by a South Korean president since 2017.

The meeting will be the second between the two leaders in two months, following their first talks held on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Gyeongju on November 1. The talks are expected to help fully restore the strategic cooperative partnership between Seoul and Beijing.

Officials said the leaders will focus on steps that bring clear benefits to people in both countries. These include cooperation on supply chains, investment, the digital economy and joint responses to cross border crime. The visit also comes as Seoul seeks stable relations with China, its biggest trading partner and a key supporter of North Korea.

South Korea has asked China to play a constructive role in creating conditions for renewed dialogue with Pyongyang. Beijing has repeated its support for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

While in Shanghai, Lee will attend events marking the 150th birth anniversary of independence leader Kim Gu and the 100th anniversary of the Provisional Government of Korea, formed during Japanese rule. Lee will attend business meetings, and cooperation agreements are expected during the visit.

Ukraine Rejects Russia Claim Of Putin Attack

Ukraine dismisses Russia's alleged drone attack claim, warning that unverified accusations risk fueling propaganda and damaging fragile diplomatic efforts toward peace

KYIV

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha on Tuesday rejected Russia's claim of a drone attack on President Vladimir Putin's residence, calling the allegation false and unsupported by evidence. Writing on X, he said nearly a day had passed since the accusation, yet Moscow had offered no proof and would not be able to do so. Sybiha said Russia often spreads disinformation and reminded the world that similar denials were made before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He criticised countries that voiced concern over the alleged attack, including Pakistan, noting they stayed silent when a Russian missile hit a Ukrainian government building on September 7, 2025. According to Sybiha, reacting to unverified claims only strengthens Russian propaganda and encourages further aggression.

He urged the international community to act responsibly and avoid responding to baseless accusations, saying such reactions harm recent diplomatic efforts. His comments followed Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement that Ukraine launched drones at Putin's Novgorod residence on December 29. Russia claimed 91 drones were intercepted with no casualties or damage reported. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also dismissed the allegation, calling it a fabrication aimed at justifying more Russian strikes. He said Ukraine would not undermine diplomacy and accused Moscow of using false claims to block peace. The remarks came shortly after US President Donald Trump hosted Zelenskyy in Florida to continue talks to end the long running war. Kyiv said responsible behaviour and careful verification remain essential as diplomatic efforts show cautious progress despite continued fighting and political tensions across the region and beyond. Officials warned misinformation could derail talks if left unchecked by global partners and allies worldwide.

HRCP Flags Arbitrary Arrests, Disappearances Across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has raised serious concern over arbitrary arrests, long detentions and enforced disappearances across the country. It cited the disappearance of two University of Peshawar students after a government jirga in November. The group also flagged the alleged abduction of former MP Nisar Panhwar and his son from Karachi in December. HRCP further reported cases of women and children detained in Balochistan, calling the practices unconstitutional and harmful.

Quad envoys met in Beijing to stress unity as tensions rose amid major Chinese military drills

Quad Envoys Reaffirm Indo Pacific Unity Amid China Drills

BEIJING

US Ambassador to China David Perdue on Tuesday reaffirmed the Quad's role in keeping the Indo Pacific free and open during talks with fellow Quad ambassadors. He said the United States Australia India Japan partnership remained strong and committed to regional stability and security. Perdue described the grouping as a force for good working to uphold a rules based regional order.

The remarks came as China began large joint military exercises around Taiwan and parts of the South China Sea. Chinese media said the drills involved ground air naval and missile units under the Eastern Theatre Command. The exercise includes patrols simulated strikes port blockades and deterrence operations to test joint combat ability. China says the move defends its sovereignty while critics see it as pressure on Taiwan.

The drills follow recent United States approval of major arms sales to Taiwan valued at about eleven billion dollars.

Taiwan strongly condemned the exercises calling them irrational provocations that threaten regional peace. Its defence ministry said forces were placed on high alert and rapid response drills were launched. Senior officers said clear rules of engagement were in place to manage any escalation responsibly.

Taiwan later reported increased Chinese aircraft and vessels operating near the island during the exercise period. Officials said dozens of sorties crossed the median line as monitoring and joint sea air patrols continued. Quad diplomats said dialogue cooperation and restraint remain vital to prevent conflict and keep the wider Indo Pacific stable amid growing rivalry and uncertainty across the region in coming months.

HRCP Raises Alarm Over Baloch Women Disappearances

QUETTA

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Tuesday expressed serious concern over the increasing arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances of Baloch women and girls. The rights body highlighted cases showing how due process is routinely bypassed, causing distress to affected families.

HRCP reported that University of Peshawar students Habib Wazir and Adnan Wazir went missing on November 12 after attending a government-convened jirga. Former lawmaker Nisar Panhwar and his son Mohsin Panhwar were allegedly taken by plain-clothes men in Karachi on December 22. The commission also noted a rise in disappearances involving women, minors, and activists such as Mahjabeen Baloch during November and December.

Specific recent cases include 15-year-old student Nasreen Baloch, reportedly taken during a night raid in Hub Chowki on December 22, and two women, Hani Dilwash, who is eight months pregnant, and 17-year-old Hair Nisa, detained during another raid on December 20. Earlier, Farzana Zehri and another woman, Rahima, were also reportedly disappeared in Khuzdar and Dalbandin, respectively.

Families of victims have protested in Kech district, demanding the safe return of four forcibly disappeared family members. The Baloch Youth Council said the protests are peaceful but largely ignored, with no information provided about the missing individuals.

World Leaders Mourn Former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia

DHAKA

Global leaders on Tuesday expressed grief over the death of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, remembering her as a major democratic figure who shaped national politics for decades.

Condolences poured in from across South Asia and beyond, highlighting her role as the country's first woman prime minister and longtime chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Nepal interim prime minister Sushila Karki said she was deeply saddened and conveyed sympathy to Zia's family and the people of Bangladesh. She praised Zia's lifelong public service and called her a close friend of Nepal who helped strengthen bilateral ties.

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu also offered condolences, saying Bangladesh had lost a historic leader during a moment of immense sorrow. He wished strength and patience for Zia's family and supporters.

Khaleda Zia died early Tuesday at age eighty while receiving treatment at a private hospital in Dhaka. The

BNP said she passed away around six am after morning prayers. She had been admitted with a lung infection and suffered for years from heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, liver illness and kidney problems.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was deeply saddened and extended condolences to the people of Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi leaders said her death was a major loss to democratic forces, adding that her long struggle against hardship would inspire future generations to continue the fight for democracy and accountable governance nationwide. Her legacy remains central to Bangladesh's political history, shaping debates on democracy, leadership, resilience, rights, opposition, reform, elections, pluralism, and freedom.

CIA Conducts Drone Strike On Venezuelan Dock Facility

WASHINGTON

The CIA carried out a drone strike earlier this month on a dock along Venezuela's coast, targeting a facility allegedly used by drug traffickers, US media reported Monday. The operation marked the first known land strike inside Venezuela under the Trump administration.

The dock was used by Venezuelan gangs to store drugs and load them onto boats for shipment. At the time of the strike, no one was at the site, and there were no casualties.

President Donald Trump confirmed the strike, describing it as a "major explosion" at the dock area. He said the site was critical for drug operations and claimed it had been effectively disabled. Trump did not specify whether the Pentagon or another US agency carried out the strike. Venezuela's government has yet to comment.

The strike follows months of increased US military activity near Venezuela in the Caribbean, as part of an anti-narcotics campaign.

Zelenskyy Awards Housing To Heroes And Families Ukraine

KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday presented housing certificates to members of the country's Security and Defense Forces who were awarded the title "Hero of Ukraine," as well as to the families of fallen heroes, in recognition of their service and sacrifices.

In a post on X, Zelenskyy said Ukraine's strength comes from the courage of its people, who have endured hardship, preserved their identity, and defended their homeland against foreign aggressors. He emphasized that providing homes to heroes and their families is a small but important gesture of gratitude for their dedication.

"The Ukrainian home will always remain on the political map of the world. Every Ukrainian hero deserves a home of their own," Zelenskyy said. "This is the very least the state can do to say thank you for your service, for your loved ones, and for choosing Ukraine."

The ceremony comes amid heightened tensions with Russia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov claimed that Kyiv launched a drone attack on President Putin's residence in Novgorod on December 29. According to Lavrov, all 91 drones were intercepted without casualties or damage, and Moscow has decided on retaliatory measures.

Zelenskyy strongly rejected the claim, calling it a fabrication intended to undermine diplomacy. He stressed that Ukraine remains committed to peace talks and is working with the United States to continue diplomatic efforts, following a meeting between Zelenskyy and US President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago.

By awarding housing certificates, Zelenskyy highlighted the state's support for its defenders, reaffirming the commitment to recognize the bravery and sacrifices of Ukraine's military personnel and their families during ongoing conflict.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

2		4		1			5	7
	3			4		8		2
	7	8	5		2			9
3		7		8		9		5
	8		7		5	1	3	
4		1		9			7	
	2			7	9		8	
	6		4			5		1
8		3		5		7		6

4	8	1	9	2	3	6	5	7
9	2	7	8	5	6	1	3	4
5	3	6	1	4	7	8	2	9
1	9	3	5	6	8	4	7	2
8	5	6	7	1	2	3	9	6
7	6	2	3	9	4	5	8	1
6	1	8	2	3	9	7	4	5
2	7	5	4	8	1	9	6	3
3	4	9	6	7	5	2	1	8

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

ASEAN STABILITY

ASEAN Strengthened Regional Stability Despite 2025 Challenges

KUALA LUMPUR

Regional stability in Southeast Asia was strengthened in 2025, despite serious challenges, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Monday. He said the Association of Southeast Asian Nations continued to unite members and partners, bridge differences, and keep dialogue alive during a year marked by global anxiety and uncertainty.

Malaysia took over the ASEAN chairmanship at a difficult time, Anwar said, adding that the bloc stayed committed to togetherness, mutual respect, and peaceful discussion. He noted that ASEAN remained an important platform for cooperation and consensus building. Malaysia formally handed over the chair to the Philippines for 2026, marking the fifth time Malaysia led the grouping since ASEAN was formed in 1967.

Anwar also referred to a

special meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers held in Kuala Lumpur on December 22. The meeting focused on renewed tensions between Cambodia and Thailand. Ministers urged both sides to show restraint and stop all hostilities. They expressed concern over civilian deaths, damage to homes, and the displacement of people along the border.

ASEAN members called on both countries to allow civilians to return safely to their homes and livelihoods. They urged dialogue, trust building, and de escalation, including humanitarian cooperation and respect for international law. Malaysia briefed members on efforts made by Anwar to encourage peace, while Cambodia and Thailand shared their positions. ASEAN reaffirmed unity, centrality, and its role in maintaining regional peace, security, stability, and shared prosperity for Southeast Asia through continued diplomacy, patience, cooperation, dialogue, engagement, restraint, understanding, trust, balance, respect.

QUICK READ

Meta snaps up Singapore startup Manus

Chennai

Meta Platforms has acquired Singapore-based artificial intelligence startup Manus, reinforcing its aggressive push to expand capabilities in general-purpose AI systems amid rising global competition. While financial details were not disclosed, the deal is expected to bolster Meta's expertise in autonomous AI agents that can reason, plan and execute complex tasks across applications. Manus is known for building versatile AI agents with broad enterprise and consumer use cases. The acquisition aligns with CEO Mark Zuckerberg's strategy of making AI a core driver of long-term growth, alongside heavy investments in large language models, data centres and custom AI chips.

Govt releases white paper on democratising access to AI infrastructure

New Delhi

The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government on Tuesday released a white paper on democratising access to Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure. The white paper defines democratising access to AI infrastructure as making the AI infrastructure - compute, datasets, and model ecosystem available and affordable, such that it reaches a wide set of users. It refers to empowering a wide set of users to engage with and benefit from AI capabilities. When compute, datasets, and model tooling are broadly available, individuals and institutions expand what they can do, like aiming to design local language tools and adapt assistive technologies.

Reforms 2025 Mark Shift to Outcome-Based Governance

Sweeping economic reforms in 2025 signal outcome-focused governance, easing compliance, empowering taxpayers, and strengthening India

NEW DELHI

The economic reforms undertaken by the government in 2025 represent a decisive move towards outcome-based governance, aimed at reducing friction for citizens and businesses while improving transparency, efficiency, and accountability. According to an official statement issued on Tuesday, these measures are designed to lay a strong foundation for sustained and inclusive economic growth, positioning India as a resilient and globally competitive economy.

A central pillar of the reform agenda is the simplification of taxation, particularly direct taxes. In a major relief for Indian families and individual taxpayers, the Union Budget 2025–26 introduced significant changes to the income-tax structure. Under the new tax regime, annual incomes up to ₹12 lakh have been exempted from income tax, while salaried taxpayers effectively enjoy an exemption up to ₹12.75 lakh due to the standard deduction. This landmark decision has reaffirmed the government's commitment to the middle class, leaving millions of households with higher disposable incomes. The increased financial headroom is expected to boost consumption, encourage savings, and stimulate investment across sectors.

Further strengthening the tax framework, the government announced a comprehensive overhaul of the Income-tax Act, 1961 in July 2024, culminating in the New Income Tax Act, 2025. This reform seeks to simplify legal language, remove outdated provisions, and consolidate and restructure the law to make compliance easier and more transparent. The new Act promotes a digital-first enforcement system and expands faceless tax administration, reducing personal interface and discretion. It also consolidates compliance-related provisions such as Tax Deducted at Source under a single section, empowers the government to roll out technology-enabled schemes, and enhances dispute-resolution mechanisms to ensure quicker and fairer outcomes.

Beyond taxation, labour reforms form another cornerstone of the 2025 economic agenda. In a landmark move, 29 existing labour laws have been consolidated into four comprehensive Labour Codes: the Code on Wages, the Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.

TN Emerges as Best-Performing State: Dy CM

CHENNAI

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said Tamil Nadu leads national growth charts, crediting inclusive, people-centric Dravidian governance

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Tuesday said that Tamil Nadu has emerged as the best-performing state in the country, registering an impressive economic growth rate of 11.19 per cent. He attributed this achievement to the inclusive and people-centric Dravidian model of governance, which, he said, has placed social justice, welfare, and balanced development at the core of policymaking.

Speaking after inaugurating a state-of-the-art hockey stadium constructed at a cost of ₹9.67 crore in Coimbatore, Udhayanidhi Stalin noted that Tamil Nadu's growth story has drawn national attention. He emphasised that the economic progress achieved by the state was not incidental, but the result of sustained policy initiatives and governance practices that focus on inclusivity and long-term development. According to him, the Dravidian model ensures that economic expansion goes hand in hand with social equity.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister also inaugurated an elephant camp and unveiled a series of modernisation initiatives for the Forest Department, aimed at strengthening wildlife conservation, improving animal welfare, and enhancing infrastructure for frontline forest staff. He further laid foundation stones for several new development projects, inaugurated completed works, and distributed welfare assistance to beneficiaries, underlining the government's commitment to holistic development.

Recalling the legacy of former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, Udhayanidhi Stalin said that both he and Chief Minister M. K. Stalin have always accorded special importance to the development of Coimbatore. He quoted the Chief Minister as insisting that government schemes must reach every section of society, irrespective of political affiliations. Our governance model is designed not only to benefit those who voted for us, but to ensure that even those who did not support us experience the impact of inclusive development, he said.

Highlighting the government's focus on women's empowerment, the Deputy Chief Minister referred to flagship initiatives such as the Vidiyal Payanam scheme providing free bus travel for women, the Pudhumai Penn scheme encouraging girls' education, and the Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thogai scheme offering monthly financial assistance to women heads of families. These initiatives, he said, have strengthened women's participation in education, employment, and public life. He also announced that the government would soon distribute 10 lakh laptops to college students across Tamil Nadu, reinforcing its commitment to education, digital empowerment, and skill development.

Cement volumes in India to expand by 6-7 pc in FY27

NEW DELHI

India's cement industry is projected to record a 6-7 per cent growth in volumes in FY27, supported by sustained demand from housing and infrastructure sectors after a 6.5-7.5 per cent rise in FY26 (on a higher base in H2 FY25), a report showed on Tuesday. The industry is expected to add 42-44 million MTPA capacity in FY27, after 43-45 million MTPA capacity addition in FY26. Rating agency ICRA said that cement demand remains strong, with volumes expanding by 8.5 per cent in the eight months of FY26, aided by robust construction activities. With post-monsoon construction expected to pick up pace, a sequential improvement in demand is likely to take place in H2 FY26, it added.

India's real estate sector saw robust investor confidence as capital market deals surged in the first nine months

Indian Real Estate Raises ₹17,867 Crore in FY26 So Far

MUMBAI

The Indian real estate sector has recorded a strong surge in capital market activity during the first nine months of FY26, with 11 deals raising a total of ₹17,867 crore, according to a report released on Tuesday by Equirus Capital. The report highlights that the number of deals already matches the total transactions completed during the entire FY25, indicating sustained investor confidence and a potentially record-breaking year for the sector.

With three months still remaining in the financial year, both the total amount raised and the number of deals are expected to surpass previous highs, making FY26 the most active year for real estate capital market transactions in the last six years. Since FY18, the sector has cumulatively raised ₹72,331 crore through capital markets, underscoring the growing depth and maturity of India's real estate investment landscape.

Among various segments, Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) have emerged as the largest beneficiaries, accounting for ₹31,241 crore of total fund-raising since FY18. Large-cap real estate companies followed with ₹20,437 crore, while mid-cap firms raised ₹12,496 crore and small-cap companies garnered ₹8,156 crore. This diversified fund flow reflects broad-based confidence across the real estate value chain, from institutional-grade commercial assets to residential developers.

The report noted that India's real estate growth story remains firmly supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, rising consumption, and sustained urban development. Recent trends suggest that the current up-cycle in real estate is likely to continue in the near to medium term, driven by improved affordability, stable interest rates, and rising investment interest.

Home loan rates and rental yields have remained largely steady since the post-COVID period beginning FY21, offering relief to both homebuyers and investors. According to the report, the gap between home loan interest rates and rental yields is expected to narrow to below 500 basis points in FY26, improving the attractiveness of residential investments. Housing affordability has also improved significantly across India over the past three decades.

'Over 5.5 lakh trade marks registered in India in 2024-25'

NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday that a record number of over 5.5 lakh domestic filings for trade marks were made in India during 2024-25, reflecting the strength of the country's institutions in safeguarding the interests of innovators and creators who play an important role in boosting economic growth.

Citing PM Modi's mantra of Ideate in India, Innovate in India, Make in India & Make for the World, the minister highlighted that the Trade Marks Act, 1999, has been a key pillar in protecting the interests of innovators for the last 26 years.

Along with that, the Narendra Modi Government's sincere efforts to foster the innovation ecosystem have strengthened the country's position in the global Intellectual Property (IP) landscape, promoting innovation-led growth that benefits not just India, but the world, he observed.

Goyal further stated that the highest number of trade marks registered were in pharmaceuticals, veterinary, and sanitary preparations.

Policy reform, digitisation, and initiatives contributing to India's growing global standing in the IP ecosystem

The Trade Marks Act is a piece of legislation that safeguards the intellectual properties of businesses against infringement. It enables businesses to protect their brand while at the same time allowing and promoting fair competition in the market. The Act has been reviewed several times to take into account various changes in the global business ecosystem and the demands of modern businesses.

As businesses expand globally, the protection of trade marks becomes more significant, and the Act adequately takes into account this aspect of trade marks as well to ensure fair protection to firms.

Mukesh Ambani unveils AI manifesto, aims 10x boost

NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani on Tuesday unveiled a draft Reliance AI Manifesto, outlining plans to transform the conglomerate into an AI-native deep-tech enterprise. The initiative aims to achieve a 10-fold productivity increase for over 6 lakh employees and a similar impact on India's economy and society.

Ambani described AI as "the most consequential technological development in human history" and said Reliance seeks to deliver 'Affordable AI for every Indian', embedding AI across its businesses while ensuring safety, trust, and accountability. The manifesto emphasises workflow transformation over technology projects, with AI and automation removing repetitive tasks, improving decisions, and enhancing quality, while retaining human accountability.

The draft also envisions broader societal impact, leveraging Reliance's retail, telecom, energy, and life sciences ecosystems. Employees are invited to submit AI implementation ideas between January 10 and 26, with the manifesto intended as a shared commitment to "build a New Reliance and a New India."

Ambani stressed that AI will augment, not replace, people, driving efficiency, sustainability, and India's technological self-reliance through indigenous hardware, robotics, and cross-domain AI applications.

About 50 pc of 2025 listings below issue price

MUMBAI

After a year packed with nonstop IPO launches and record-breaking fundraising, India's primary market is now showing signs of a reality check. While 2025 will go down as one of the most active years for initial public offerings, the performance of many newly listed stocks has failed to live up to the excitement seen on listing day.

Data shows that nearly half of the companies that went public this year are now trading below their issue prices.

This sharp contrast between strong listing-day gains and weak long-term performance has raised fresh questions over IPO valuations and investor expectations.

Over the past 12 months, as many as 344 companies entered the stock market and together raised more than Rs 1.75 lakh crore. Out of 103 companies that debuted on the exchanges in 2025, a majority of 69 stocks listed above their IPO prices, while 33 opened below their issue levels.

However, this early enthusiasm did not last for many stocks. At present, only 54 IPO stocks are trading above their issue prices, while 47 have slipped below, showing how uneven post-listing performance has been despite a blockbuster year for fundraising.

The worst-performing IPOs of the year were mostly from smaller issues, particularly those with issue sizes below Rs 1,000 crore.

Shares of Glottis have fallen 52 per cent from their issue price of Rs 129. Gem Aromatics is down 48 per cent, while VMS TMT has declined 46 per cent from its IPO level.

BMW Ventures has dropped 41 per cent, while Arisinfra Solutions and Jaro Institute are down 39 per cent each.

India's Russian crude imports dip in Dec, trade remains structurally intact

NEW DELHI

India's imports of Russian crude oil are set to fall to around 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in December, down from 1.84 million bpd in November, according to real-time data from Kpler. Analysts say the decline is due to US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil and temporary supply disruptions, rather than a structural shift in sourcing. Indian refiners continue to buy from non-sanctioned Russian entities, rerouting shipments through intermediaries to maintain supplies. While Russia's share of India's crude imports fell from about a third in November to less than a quarter in December, demand for Russian barrels remains strong, driven by pricing economics and refinery compatibility.

Experts expect volumes to gradually recover from January as new suppliers and trading channels step in. Discounts on Russian Urals crude have stabilised at USD 6.50 per barrel, making it competitive against Middle Eastern grades. Analysts say Russian oil is likely to retain a structural presence in India's crude basket despite short-term adjustments.

INDIAAI MISSION GROWTH

IndiaAI Mission Positions India at the Forefront

NEW DELHI

India is poised at the threshold of a new technological era powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), with the government committing more than ₹10,300 crore over five years under the ambitious IndiaAI Mission. Announced on Tuesday, the mission includes the deployment of nearly 38,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), significantly strengthening the country's computing infrastructure and reinforcing India's ambition to emerge as a global AI powerhouse.

According to an official statement, the IndiaAI Mission is designed to create a comprehensive and inclusive AI ecosystem by expanding high-performance computing capacity, fostering the development of homegrown foundational AI models, and supporting startups and entrepreneurs. The initiative aims to ensure that AI-driven innovation directly benefits citizens while accelerating research, skill development, and enterprise growth across sectors.

AI applications are already making a tangible impact in critical areas such as agriculture, healthcare, education, and governance. From precision farming and disease diagnosis to adaptive learning platforms and efficient public service delivery, AI-enabled solutions are demonstrating real-world value. Strategic programmes such as Digital ShramSetu, along with initiatives focused on foundational model development, are ensuring that technological advancements reach grassroots levels and bridge digital divides.

India's tech and AI ecosystem is witnessing rapid expansion. At present, at least six million people are employed across the technology and AI sectors, underlining the industry's role as a major employment generator. The Indian technology sector is projected to cross $280 billion in annual revenue this year, reflecting strong domestic demand and sustained global confidence. Looking ahead, AI alone is expected to add nearly $1.7 trillion to India's economy by 2035, significantly boosting productivity and economic output.

The country currently hosts over 1,800 Global Capability Centres (GCCs), with more than 500 dedicated to AI-driven functions. India's startup ecosystem has also seen remarkable growth, with more than 1.8 lakh startups operating nationwide. Notably, nearly 89 per cent of startups launched last year incorporated AI into their products or services, highlighting AI's central role in innovation.

Year End Review – 2025

Major Achievements of Karnataka's Congress Government in 2025

The year 2025 has been a landmark period for the Congress-led Karnataka government under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. From strengthening welfare programs to driving massive industrial investments and implementing groundbreaking governance reforms, the state has witnessed transformative progress across multiple sectors. This comprehensive review examines the major milestones achieved by the Karnataka government throughout 2025.

Budget 2025-26: A Record ₹4.09 Lakh Crore Outlay

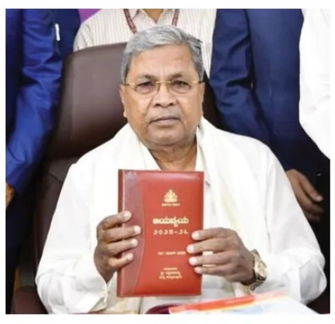
The Karnataka government presented an ambitious budget for fiscal year 2025-26 with a total estimated receipt of ₹4,08,647 crore, marking a significant increase from the previous year's ₹3,58,657 crore. This budget reflects the state's commitment to balanced development across six key dimensions: welfare programs, agriculture and rural development, urban development, investment and job creation, and governance reforms.

The state's economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth, with Karnataka contributing 8.4 percent to India's GDP. The state economy is projected to grow at 7.4 percent in 2024-25, surpassing the national growth rate of 6.4 percent. This strong economic performance has enabled the government to maintain fiscal discipline while pursuing ambitious development programs.

Five Guarantee Schemes: Continuing the Social Revolution

Record Allocation and Impact

One of the most significant achievements of 2025 has been the successful continuation and expansion of the Five Guarantee Schemes, with a record allocation of ₹51,034 crore in the 2025-26 budget. As of August 2025, the government had disbursed a staggering ₹95,450 crore across all five schemes, directly benefiting millions of Karnataka residents.



The allocation of ₹233 crore per assembly constituency under these schemes has strengthened public trust in the administration. The government has maintained fiscal discipline by adhering to the fiscal deficit norm of 3 percent of GSDP and maintaining a debt-to-GSDP ratio of 25 percent over the past two budgets.

ANNA BHAGYA: Ensuring Food Security

Under the Anna Bhagya scheme, the government provides 10 kg of free rice per person per month to beneficiaries holding Antyodaya or Priority Household ration cards. The scheme currently benefits 4.21 crore people. By August 2025, ₹14,655 crore had been disbursed under this program.

The government has implemented advanced technology-driven measures including CCTV surveillance in warehouses, GPS-based vehicle tracking, and a Command Control Centre to ensure efficient distribution and reduce fraud. According to the October 2025 study, 91 percent of families have been able to save on foodgrain expenses and redirect that money towards purchasing more nutritious items such as vegetables and milk.

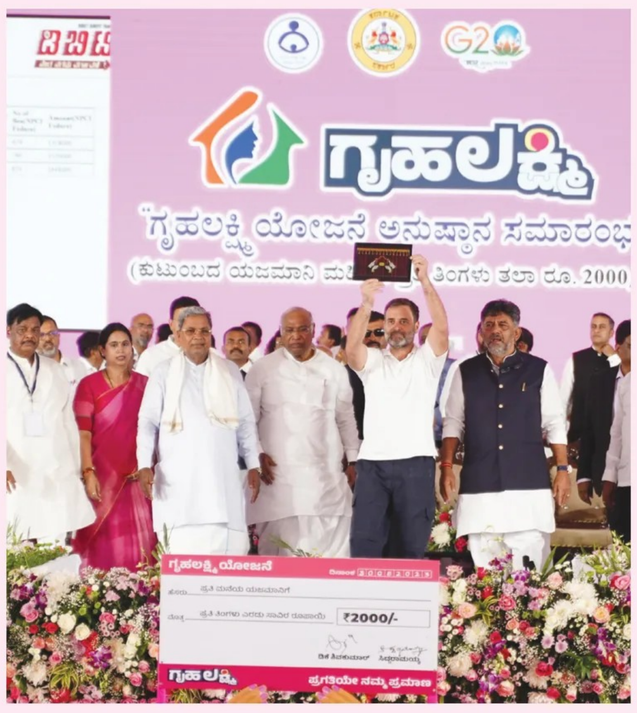
SHAKTI SCHEME: Empowering Women's Mobility

The Shakti scheme, offering free bus travel to women across Karnataka in non-AC, non-premium buses, has been a transformative success. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, 226.53 crore women passengers benefitted from this scheme, with the government spending ₹5,015 crore. For 2025-26, the allocation has been increased to ₹5,300 crore.

According to an independent study released in October 2025, the Shakti scheme has charted a new course for women's empowerment. Nineteen percent of women beneficiaries in the state have either secured better-paying jobs or found new employment opportunities thanks to free bus travel. The scheme has significantly increased women's mobility and participation in the workforce.

Gruha Lakshmi: Financial Independence for Women

The Gruha Lakshmi scheme provides ₹2,000 per month to women heads of households, aimed at enhancing financial independence. In 2024-25, 1.22 crore women received financial assistance under this scheme at a cost of ₹28,608 crore to the exchequer. By August 2025, the government had disbursed ₹49,080 crore under this scheme alone. The government has announced initiatives to integrate these beneficiaries into self-help groups under the Akka Cooperative Society, improving their access to financial resources and entrepreneurship opportunities.



Gruha Jyoti: Powering Homes for Free

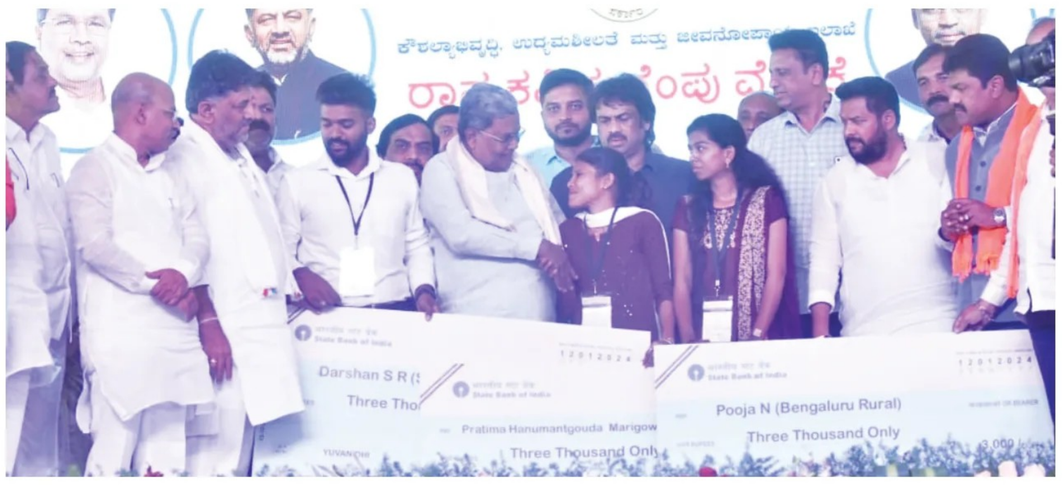
The Gruha Jyoti scheme provides free electricity up to 200 units to eligible households, alleviating financial pressure on low-income families. As of August 2025, the government had spent ₹21,213 crore on this scheme. The independent study revealed that 72 percent of women beneficiaries' households have increased electricity usage, with 43 percent of families purchasing new household appliances, thereby raising their standard of living.

Yuva Nidhi: Supporting Unemployed Youth

The Yuva Nidhi scheme provides unemployment allowances to graduates (₹3,000 per month) and diploma holders (₹1,500 per month). In 2024-25, 2.58 lakh youths registered for the scheme, receiving a total of ₹286 crore through Direct Benefit Transfer. By August 2025, ₹520 crore had been disbursed under this scheme. As of January 2025, there were over 1.74 lakh beneficiaries.

Yuva Nidhi empowers unemployed youth through financial support and skill development

Beyond financial assistance, the government has linked the scheme with the Industry Linkage Cell to provide skill training, enhancing job prospects for Karnataka's youth. According to the independent study, 42 percent of beneficiaries reported using the allowance for skill development and job searches, helping them move towards self-reliance.

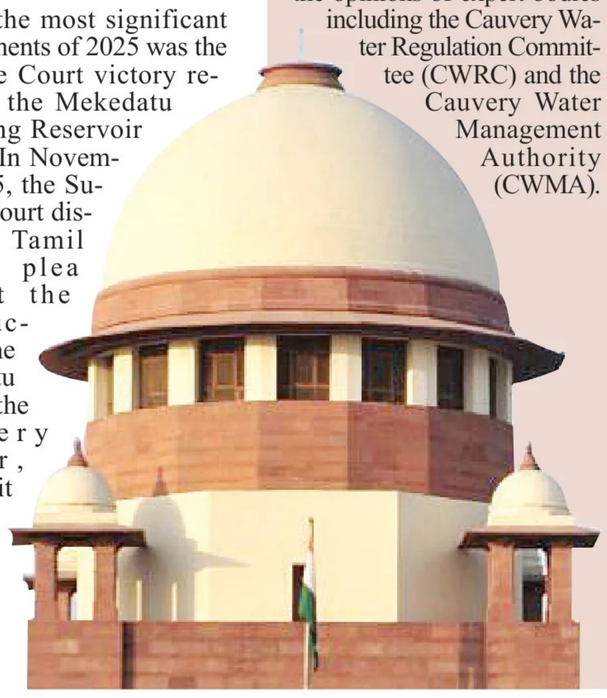


Transparent Implementation

The government has demonstrated its commitment to transparency and efficiency through technology-driven governance measures. Over ₹1 lakh crore has already been directly transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts, eliminating intermediaries and ensuring that benefits reach the intended recipients without leakage.

Historic Supreme Court Victory on Mekedatu Project

One of the most significant achievements of 2025 was the Supreme Court victory regarding the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir project. In November 2025, the Supreme Court dismissed Tamil Nadu's plea against the construction of the Mekedatu dam on the Cauvery River, terming it premature.



THE VERDICT

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, Justices K Vinod Chandran, and Justice NV Anjaria ruled that the preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) could proceed after considering Tamil Nadu's objections and the opinions of expert bodies including the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) and the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA).

The court emphasized that Karnataka is bound to release the stipulated 177 TMC water to Tamil Nadu annually and that failure to comply would constitute contempt of court. However, the court also held that no state has the right to interfere with another state's decision regarding the management and use of water allotted to it unless such action reduces the water allocated to that state.

Project Acceleration

Following the Supreme Court's decision, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar announced immediate steps to accelerate the project. The Karnataka government formed a team led by KERS Director K.G. Mahesh to expedite construction. A project office has been established in Harobele, with additional offices set to open in Ramanagara.

The Mekedatu project aims to address Bengaluru's critical drinking water needs and generate hydroelectric power. Shivakumar described the verdict as a victory for all Cauvery riparian states, emphasizing that the project would benefit Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as much as Karnataka by ensuring reliable water release even during years of inadequate rainfall.

Greater Bengaluru Governance Act: Revolutionary Urban Reform

IMPLEMENTATION OF GBGA

May 2025 marked a watershed moment in Bengaluru's urban governance with the implementation of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act (GBGA) on May 14, 2025. This landmark legislation replaced the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Act of 2020 and introduced the most radical change in the state capital's governance structure.

RESTRUCTURING THE MEGACITY

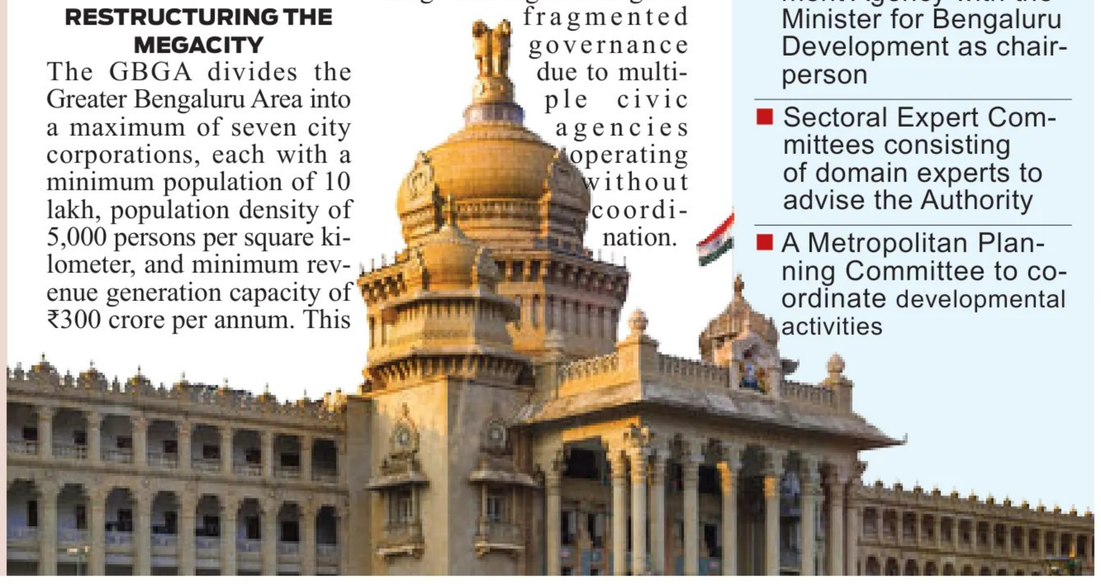
The GBGA divides the Greater Bengaluru Area into a maximum of seven city corporations, each with a minimum population of 10 lakh, population density of 5,000 persons per square kilometer, and minimum revenue generation capacity of ₹300 crore per annum. This decentralization aims to improve service delivery, enhance efficiency, and ensure responsive governance closer to citizens.

The Act establishes the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) as the apex body, chaired by the Chief Minister, with the Chief Commissioner serving as member secretary. The GBA coordinates among various civic agencies and city corporations, addressing the long-standing challenge of fragmented governance due to multiple civic agencies operating without coordination.

Specialized Bodies

The GBGA establishes several specialized bodies including:

- A Climate Action Cell headed by the Special Commissioner (Forest, Environment and Climate Change) to implement the Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan
- An Economic Development Agency with the Minister for Bengaluru Development as chairperson
- Sectoral Expert Committees consisting of domain experts to advise the Authority
- A Metropolitan Planning Committee to coordinate developmental activities



India's Historic Achievements in 2025

As 2025 draws to a close, India stands at a remarkable juncture in its journey as a rising global power. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his final Mann Ki Baat address of the year, described 2025 as a year marked by proud milestones across sectors, from national security and sports to scientific progress and economic resilience. The year witnessed India asserting itself on multiple fronts: executing bold military operations, clinching historic sports victories, achieving technological breakthroughs in space exploration, and maintaining its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy. This comprehensive review captures the defining achievements that made 2025 a watershed year for the nation, alongside significant global milestones that shaped the world.

Operation Sindoor: Redefining India's National Security Doctrine

The Genesis: Pahalgam Terror Attack

The year 2025 will be forever etched in India's military history as the year of Operation Sindoor—a military campaign that fundamentally altered the country's counter-terrorism doctrine. The operation was a response to the devastating Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025, in which 26 civilians, including 25 tourists, were brutally killed by terrorists linked to Pakistan-based militant groups. The attack specifically targeted Hindu men, leaving many widows behind, a fact that resonated deeply with the nation and gave the operation its name. Sindoor refers to the vermillion mark worn by married Hindu women, symbolizing the widows created by this horrific attack.

The Military Response

On May 7, 2025, India launched Operation Sindoor with precision missile and air strikes targeting nine sites across Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir and Pakistan's Punjab province. The 25-minute precision strike utilized advanced drones and air-launched weapons to target 24 terror launchpads and training camps belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Hizbul Mujahideen. What distinguished this operation from previous strikes was its scale, technological sophistication, and strategic messaging. Indian forces executed what became known as the subcontinent's first non-contact war—a technology-driven kinetic operation involving missiles and drones where neither side physically crossed territorial boundaries.

The operation witnessed the largest aerial engagement in recent times, with more than 125 fighter jets from both sides present at standoff ranges. India's indigenous defense capabilities proved their worth as the operation successfully neutralized immediate threats while demonstrating the country's evolving military doctrine. The strikes also targeted, for the first time, the headquarters of terrorist organizations at Muridke and Bahawalpur deep inside Pakistan—locations previously considered off-limits.

Strategic Significance and Outcomes

Operation Sindoor represented a paradigm shift in several ways. It established India's willingness to conduct punitive strikes below the nuclear threshold, challenging Pakistan's long-held assumption that its nuclear weapons provided immunity for cross-border terrorism. The operation demonstrated India's technological superiority, with indigenous assets like Cartosat-2C providing precise high-resolution targeting and RISAT enabling all-weather surveillance.

The conflict concluded on May 10, 2025, with a stoppage of firing agreement, but the operation's impact extended far beyond the immediate military objectives. It showcased the success of India's defense indigenization policies—from air defense systems to drones and counter-unmanned aerial systems capabilities. Indigenous technology delivered when it mattered most, validating decades of investment in self-reliance.

Sports Glory: Historic Triumphs Across Disciplines

Women's Cricket World Cup: Breaking the Final Frontier

If Operation Sindoor defined India's military resolve, the Women's Cricket World Cup victory defined its sporting excellence. On November 2, 2025, the Indian women's cricket team scripted history by winning the ICC Women's ODI World Cup for the first time, defeating South Africa by 52 runs in the final at Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium. After heartbreaks in 2005 and 2017, Harmanpreet Kaur's side delivered a complete performance that made India the first women's team from Asia to win a global title across formats.

Shafali Verma, who was called back into the squad as injury cover, scored a career-best 87 off 78 balls, while Deepti Sharma's all-round brilliance—scoring 58 runs and claiming 5 wickets for 39 runs—proved decisive. The victory was particularly sweet considering India's precarious position after three consecutive defeats in the league stage against South Africa, Australia, and England. Smriti Mandhana topped the tournament with 434 runs, the most by an Indian batter in a single Women's ODI World Cup.

Men's Cricket: Dual Trophy Success

The men's team complemented the women's historic achievement with their own stellar performances. India won the ICC Champions Trophy in March 2025, remaining undefeated throughout the tournament in Dubai to secure their third Champions Trophy title. Under Rohit Sharma's captaincy, the team reaffirmed their dominance in white-ball cricket. Later in the year, India also clinched the Asia Cup T20 title, defeating Pakistan in the final by five wickets their third victory over Pakistan in the tournament, which was marked by political tensions following Operation Sindoor.

Beyond Cricket: Athletic Excellence

India's sporting achievements extended well beyond the cricket field. Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra achieved a landmark feat at the Doha Diamond League by breaching the 90-meter mark with a throw of 90.23 meters, a psychological and physical barrier that had eluded him. This achievement solidified his status as one of the world's premier javelin throwers. He later hosted the successful Neeraj Chopra Classic in Bengaluru, drawing over 14,000 spectators and demonstrating India's growing capability to host world-class athletic events.

Beyond Cricket: Athletic Excellence

Chess, Shooting, and Paralympic Success

The year saw remarkable achievements across other disciplines. Nineteen-year-old Divya Deshmukh captured the FIDE Women's World Cup title, defeating veteran Koneru Humpy in an all-Indian final—India's first-ever triumph in the tournament. The victory earned her the Grandmaster norm and added another chapter to India's flourishing chess success story.

Indian shooters delivered outstanding performances, with Samrat Rana becoming World Champion in men's 10m air pistol at the 2025 World Championships, also contributing to team gold and mixed team silver. He became only the third Indian pistol shooter to achieve this feat.

Para-athletes scripted their own history by clinching 22 medals at the World Para Athletics Championships—India's best-ever medal haul at the event. Indian archers achieved historic results, with Prathamesh Fuge being part of the men's compound team that won India's first-ever gold in the compound category at World Archery Championships.

Additional sporting milestones included India's clean sweep at the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup, with both men's and women's teams winning titles, and the women's blind cricket team winning the Women's Blind T20 World Cup—demonstrating the breadth of India's sporting excellence.

Global Context: Major World Events in 2025

Geopolitical Developments

While India achieved remarkable progress, the global landscape remained turbulent. The Ukraine-Russia conflict entered its fourth year with Russia making meager territorial gains despite suffering approximately 1,000 casualties daily. In July, Cambodia and Thailand engaged in their worst border conflict in decades, demonstrating that regional tensions remained high globally.

The Middle East saw continued instability, though an Israel-Hamas ceasefire brought temporary relief in January, allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza. However, the situation remained fragile, serving as a reminder of the region's persistent challenges.

Catholic Church Leadership

In a historic development, the Roman Catholic Church selected Cardinal Robert Prevost as Pope Leo XIV in May 2025—the first American pope in the church's 267-pope history. Born and raised in Chicago, his selection marked a significant shift in Catholic leadership.

Shafali, Renuka rise; Deepti stays at No.1 spot in ICC Women's T20I rankings

Indian stars surge upward in latest ICC update after dominant Sri Lanka series show

DUBAI

India opener Shafali Verma and pacer Renuka Singh Thakur made significant gains in the latest ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings, while seasoned all-rounder Deepti Sharma continued her reign at the top of the bowling chart following India's commanding performance against Sri Lanka.

Swashbuckling batter Shafali climbed four places to sixth position after a series of impactful knocks in the ongoing five-match T20I series. The 21-year-old, who was once the world's top-ranked batter in the format, returned to prime form with scores of 69 not out off 34 balls in the second T20I, followed by consecutive unbeaten 79s in the third and fourth matches in Thiruvananthapuram. Her fearless stroke-play at the top has been a key factor in India racing to a 4-0 lead in the series.

Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana retained her third position among batters after ending a brief lean patch with a fluent 80 in the fourth T20I. Jemimah Rodrigues, however, slipped one place to 10th despite consistent contributions through the series.

In the bowling rankings, Deepti Sharma continued to hold firm at the No.1 spot, underlining her consistency and value as a front-line spinner. She was joined in the top 10 by Renuka Singh Thakur, who jumped eight places to joint sixth. Renuka's rise came on the back of a match-winning spell of four for 21 in the third T20I, which sealed the series for India.

India's spin depth was further reflected in the rise of left-arm spinners Shree Charani and Vaishnavi Sharma. Charani moved up 17 places to 52nd, while Vaishnavi made a remarkable leap of 390 places to 124th in her debut international series.

For Sri Lanka, opener Hasini Perera advanced 114 places to 71st among batters, while all-rounder Kavisha Dilhari climbed three spots to 79th. The rankings gains come as teams fine-tune combinations ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in England and Wales.

Bradman's baggy green from India series up for auction

SYDNEY

Rare Don Bradman Baggy Green from landmark India series heads to auction

A rare Baggy Green cap worn by legendary Australian batter Sir Donald Bradman during the historic 1947/48 home series against India will go under the hammer next month, offering collectors a unique slice of cricketing heritage.

The cap was gifted by Bradman to Indian all-rounder Sriranga Wasudev Sohoni during the series, which was particularly significant as it marked India's first international cricket tour after Independence. The gesture reflected the mutual respect between players in an era remembered for sportsmanship as much as for Bradman's extraordinary feats with the bat.

Unlike most surviving Baggy Green caps from Bradman's era — many of which are preserved in museums or locked away in tightly held private collections — this cap has never been publicly displayed or previously offered for sale.

According to the Australian Associated Press (AAP), it has remained in uninterrupted family ownership for more than 75 years, adding greatly to its historical and sentimental value.

"This is a genuine piece of cricket history that Sir Donald Bradman personally gifted," said Lee Hames of Lloyds Auctions. "Its uninterrupted family ownership for 75 years and its direct link to 'The Don' make it one of the most important Bradman-related pieces to come to auction."

During Bradman's playing days, Test cricketers wore a different Baggy Green cap for each series, making surviving examples from specific tours especially rare. The 1947/48 series against India was one of Bradman's most dominant, as he amassed 715 runs in six innings at a staggering average of 178.75. His haul included three centuries and a memorable double hundred as Australia swept the series 4-0.

Widely regarded as the greatest batter the game has known, Bradman finished his career with an almost mythical Test average of 99.94. He passed away in 2001 at the age of 92.

The bidding for the cap at Lloyds Auctions will open at one Australian dollar and close on January 26, drawing interest from collectors, museums, institutions and cricket fans worldwide. A Baggy Green from the same India series fetched Rs 2.63 crore last year, underlining the enduring allure of Bradman memorabilia.

Arjun Erigaisi shocks Carlsen as Indians deliver mixed results in Doha

World Blitz: Erigaisi stuns Carlsen to emerge joint leader on day one

DOHA

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi produced a sensational performance to stun world No.1 Magnus Carlsen and finish day one of the World Blitz Championships as joint leader, while Indian women players Koneru Humpy and Divya Deshmukh slipped down the standings in the blitz section.

Erigaisi showcased nerves of steel and fine endgame technique to outlast Carlsen in a dramatic Round 9 encounter. The Indian prevailed in a tense finish with just nine seconds on his clock against Carlsen's three, triggering visible frustration from the Norwegian, who slammed the table after losing on time. At one point, Carlsen even fumbled his queen as it slipped off the board, costing him precious seconds and the game.

Riding on that morale-boosting victory, Erigaisi went on to defeat Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattorov and drew three other games to end the day on 10 points from 13 rounds. He was tied at the top with France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and American Fabiano Caruana, emerging as one of the strongest contenders for the title.

The leaders were closely followed by six players on 9.5 points, while reigning co-champions Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi finished the day with 9/13. Carlsen, chasing a ninth World Blitz title after winning his sixth Rapid crown on Sunday, also suffered a second setback against Caruana after overlooking a rook. Dutchman Jorden van Foreest briefly surged ahead as sole leader midway through the day after beating elite players including Erigaisi, handing the Indian his only loss. However, van Foreest faltered later and ended on 8/13.

T20 WC: Archer named in England's provisional squad despite nursing injury

LONDON

Injury-prone fast bowler Jofra Archer was on Tuesday named in England's provisional 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, to be held in India and Sri Lanka in February, despite continuing his recovery from a left side strain sustained during the third Ashes Test in Adelaide earlier this month.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed that Archer will miss England's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka beginning January 22, which includes three ODIs and three T20Is, as he continues rehabilitation under medical supervision. The injury had already ruled him out of the fourth Ashes Test in Melbourne, which England won inside two days.

"Archer is included in the provisional T20 World Cup squad but will miss the tour of Sri Lanka as he continues his rehabilitation," the ECB said in a statement. England will be hoping the express pacer regains full fitness in time for the global event, given his proven impact in major tournaments.

England's squad will be captained by Harry Brook, with another pace option in Joshua Tongue earning a spot despite being uncapped in limited-overs internationals. Tongue, who has featured in just two Ashes Tests so far, impressed with 12 wickets at 18.58 and was the leading wicket-taker in this year's Men's Hundred with 14 scalps.

Archer was among England's standout performers in the Ashes before injury struck. He claimed nine wickets at an average of 27.11, including a five-wicket haul in Adelaide, and also registered his maiden Test half-century in the same match.

England will open their T20 World Cup campaign against Nepal in Mumbai on February 8, followed by fixtures against the West Indies (February 11, Mumbai), Bangladesh (February 14, Kolkata) and Italy (February 16, Kolkata).

Batting all-rounder Will Jacks returned to both squads after missing the New Zealand white-ball tour, while seamer Brydon Carse and batter Zak Crawley were recalled for the Sri Lanka tour. However, Jamie Smith, Jordan Cox and Saqib Mahmood were omitted from the provisional World Cup squad.

The provisional selection underlines England's intent to balance experience with emerging talent as they build toward the T20 showpiece.

Infantino defends 2026 WC ticket prices, cites 'crazy' demand

DUBAI

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has defended the much-criticised ticket prices for the 2026 World Cup, insisting that unprecedented global demand justified the pricing structure and stressing that all revenues would be reinvested into football worldwide.

Infantino revealed that organisers had received a staggering 150 million ticket requests in just the first two weeks of sales for the tournament, which will be jointly hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada. The figures, he said, highlighted the unmatched appeal of football's flagship event.

"In the last few days, there has been a lot of debate about ticketing and ticket prices," Infantino said. "We have six to seven million tickets on sale, and in 15 days we received 150 million requests. This shows how powerful the World Cup is."

Infantino's remarks were his first public response since a ticketing backlash erupted earlier this month, with fan organisations branding prices as "extortionate" and "astronomical". In response to the criticism, FIFA announced that a limited number of tickets would be made available at a lower price point of $60.

According to Infantino, the majority of ticket requests have come from the United States, followed by Germany and Britain. He compared the surge in demand with historical figures, noting that FIFA had sold 44 million World Cup tickets over the past century.

"In 100 years of World Cup history, FIFA sold 44 million tickets in total," he said. "In just two weeks for the next World Cup, we could have filled 300 years of World Cups. This is absolutely crazy."

The FIFA chief emphasised that the revenue generated would not be profit-driven but reinvested into developing the game globally. "The revenues generated go back to football all over the world," he said, adding that FIFA supports football operations in around 150 countries.

AFCON: Host Morocco and SA join Egypt in knockout stage as Salah gets a rest

RABAT

Host nation Morocco and South Africa sealed their places in the Africa Cup of Nations knockout stage, while Egypt rested star forward Mohamed Salah with qualification already secured.

Morocco confirmed progression with an emphatic 3-0 victory over Zambia to top Group A, keeping alive hopes of playing all their knockout matches in Rabat's Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, which will also host the final on January 18. Ayoub El Kaabi was once again the hero, scoring a spectacular bicycle kick shortly after halftime. The goal, initially ruled out for offside, was awarded following a VAR check, triggering jubilant celebrations across the stadium and city streets.

Results elsewhere also sparked celebrations beyond Rabat. In Group A, Comoros finished third with two points, while Angola did likewise in Group B. Under tournament rules, the four best third-placed teams from six groups advance, meaning teams already assured of at least third place with more than two points booked their spots in the last 16. As a result, Senegal, Congo and Benin progressed from Group D, while defending champions Ivory Coast, five-time winners Cameroon and Mozambique qualified from Group F. Burkina Faso and Sudan also advanced from Group E alongside Algeria.

Mali edged through from Group A after a goalless draw with Comoros, finishing second with three draws. However, coach Tom Sainfiet expressed concern over his side's form after Amadou Haidara was sent off late.

IOA to Host National Athletes' Forum in Ahmedabad on January 10

NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) will organise the country's first-ever National Athletes' Forum in Ahmedabad on January 10, marking a major step towards athlete-led governance in Indian sport. The forum will bring together current and former athletes, athlete representatives and key stakeholders for focused discussions on strengthening accountability and transparency.

According to the IOA, the forum will address crucial issues such as athlete rights and responsibilities, ethical governance, safe sport and integrity, mental health and well-being, anti-doping education, grievance redressal mechanisms and structured career transition pathways. The aim is to convert athlete feedback into concrete and actionable reforms.

IOA president P.T. Usha said the initiative signals a decisive shift towards athlete-centred decision-making, emphasising that athlete voices can no longer remain peripheral. Athletes' Commission chair M.C. Mary Kom said the forum provides a credible platform for athletes to directly influence governance and reform. The IOA will also hold its Annual General Meeting in Ahmedabad on January 9.

Alcaraz's Andy Murray coaching plan derailed by Djokovic: Report

MADRID

Carlos Alcaraz had explored a dramatic coaching change involving former world No.1 Andy Murray as early as the end of 2024, but the move never materialised after Murray joined Novak Djokovic's coaching team, according to a media report.

Earlier this month, Alcaraz parted ways with long-time coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, a decision that surprised the tennis world. However, the report suggests the split in December 2025 was the result of internal discussions that had begun nearly a year earlier, when the Spaniard started reassessing his long-term direction.

Alcaraz began working with Ferrero at the age of 15 and enjoyed a remarkable seven-year partnership. During that period, he won six Grand Slam titles — two each at the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open — along with 24 tour-level trophies, including eight Masters 1000 titles. He also reached the world No.1 ranking, cementing his status as one of the leading players of his generation.

Despite the success, the report claims Alcaraz became increasingly uneasy with Ferrero's methods towards the end of 2024. Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion admired for his tactical insight, was identified as a potential successor. Those plans were shelved once Murray committed to Djokovic's camp ahead of the 2025 season.

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